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# Southern Lights and Shadows

## Harper's Novelettes

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# Introduction

THE most noticeable characteristic of the extraordinary literary development of the South since the Civil War is that it is almost entirely in the direction of realism. A people who, up to that time, had been so romantic that they wished to naturalize among themselves the ideals and usages of the Walter Scott ages of chivalry, suddenly dropped all that, and in their search for literary material could apparently find nothing so good as the facts of their native life. The more "commonplace" these facts the better they seemed to like them. Evidently they believed that there was a poetry under the rude outside of their mountaineers, their slattern country wives, their shy rustic men and maids, their grotesque humorists, their wild religionists, even their black freedmen, which was worth more than the poetastery of the romantic fiction of their fathers. In this strong faith, which need not have been a conscious creed, the writers of the New South have given the world sketches and

studies and portraits of the persons and conditions of their peculiar civilization which the Russians themselves have not excelled in honesty, and hardly in simplicity. To be sure, this development was on the lines of those early humorists who antedated the romantic fictionists, and who were often in their humor so rank, so wild, so savage, so cruel, but the modern realism has refined both upon their matter and their manner. Some of the most artistic work in the American short-story, that is to say the best short-story in the world, has been done in the South, so that one may be reasonably sure of an artistic pleasure in taking up a Southern story. One finds in the Southern stories careful and conscientious character, rich local color, and effective grouping, and at the same time one finds genuine pathos, true humor, noble feeling, generous sympathy. The range of this work is so great as to include even pictures of the more conventional life, but mainly the writers keep to the life which is not conventional, the life of the fields, the woods, the cabin, the village, the little country town. It would be easier to undervalue than to overvalue them, as we believe the reader of the admirable pieces here collected will agree. W. D. H.

# The Capture of Andy Proudfoot

BY GRACE MACGOWAN COOKE

A DRY branch snapped under Kerry's foot with the report of a toy pistol. He swore perfunctorily, and gazed greedily at the cave-opening just ahead. He was a bungling woodsman at best; and now, stalking that greatest of all big game, man, the blood drummed in his ears and his heart seemed to slip a cog or two with every beat. He stood tense, yet trembling, for the space in which a man might count ten; surely if there were any one inside the cave—if the one whose presence he suspected were there—such a noise would have brought him forth. But a great banner of trumpet-creeper, which hid the opening till one was almost upon it, waved its torches unstirred except by the wind; the sand in the doorway was unpressed by any foot.

Kerry began to go forward by inches. He was weary as only a town-bred man, used to the leisurely patrolling of pave-

ments, could be after struggling obliquely up and across the pathless flank of Big Turkey Track Mountain, and then climbing to this eyrie upon Old Yellow Bald—Old Yellow, the peak that reared its "Bald" of golden grass far above the ranges of The Big and Little Turkey Tracks.

"Lord, how hungry I am!" he breathed. "I bet the feller's got grub in there." He had been out two days. He was lightheaded from lack of food; at the thought of it nervous caution gave way to mere brute instinct, and he plunged recklessly into the cave. Inside, the sudden darkness blinded him for a moment. Then there began to be visible in one corner a bed of bracken and sweet-fern; in another an orderly arrangement of tin cans upon a shelf, and the ashes of a fire, where sat a Dutch oven. The sight of this last whetted Kerry's hunger; he almost ran to the shelf, and groaned as he found the first can filled with gunpowder, the next with shot, and the third containing some odds and ends of string and nails.

He had knelt to inspect a rude box, when a little sound caused him to turn. In the doorway was a figure which raised the hair upon his head, with a chilly sensation at its roots—a tall man, with

a great mane of black locks blowing unchecked about his shoulders. He stood turned away from Kerry, having halted in the doorway as though to take a last advantage of the outer daylight upon some object of interest to him before entering. He was examining one of his own hands, and a little shivering moan escaped him. A rifle rested in the hollow of his arm; Kerry could see the outline of a big navy-pistol in his belt; and as the man shifted, another came to view; while the Irishman's practised eye did not miss the handle of a long knife in its sheath. It went swiftly through his mind that those who sent him on this errand should have warned him of the size of the quarry. Suddenly, almost without his own volition, he found himself saying: "I ask your pardon. I was dead beat an' fair famished, an' I crawled in here to—"

The tall figure in the doorway turned like a thing on a pivot; he did not start, nor spin round, as a slighter or more nervous person might have done; and a strange chill fell upon Kerry's heat when the man, whom he recognized as that one he had come to seek, faced him. The big, dark eyes looked the intruder up and down; what their owner thought

of him, what he decided concerning him, could no more be guessed than the events of next year. In a full, grave voice, but one exceedingly gentle, the owner of the cave repaired the lack of greeting.

"Howdy, stranger?" he said. "I never seen you as I come up, 'count o' havin' snagged my hand on this here gun."

He came toward Kerry with the bleeding member outstretched. Now was the Irishman's time—by all his former resolutions, by the need he had for that money reward — to deftly handcuff the outlaw. What he did was to draw the other toward the daylight, examine the hand, which was torn and lacerated on the gun-hammer, and with sundry exclamations of sympathy proceed to bind it up with strips torn from his own handkerchief.

"Snagged!" he echoed, as he noted how the great muscle of the thumb was torn across. "I don't see how you ever done that on a gun-hammer. I've nursed a good bit—I was in Cuby last year, an' I was detailed for juty in the hospital more'n half my time," he went on, eagerly. "This here hand, it's bad, 'cause it's torn. Ef you had a cut o' that size, now, you wouldn't be payin' no 'tention to it. The looks o' this here re-

minds me o' the tear one o' them there Mauser bullets makes—Gawd! but they rip the men up shockin'!" He rambled on with uneasy volubility as he attended to the wound. "You let me clean it, now. It 'll hurt some, but it 'll save ye trouble after while. You set down on the bed. Where kin I git some water?"

"Thar's a spring round the turn in the cave thar—they's a go'd in it."

But Kerry took one of the tin cans, emptied and rubbed it nervously, talking all the while—talking as though to prevent the other from speaking, and with something more than the ordinary garrulity of the nurse. "I got lost to-day," he volunteered, as he cleansed the wound skilfully and drew its ragged lips together. "Gosh! but you tore that thumb up! You won't hardly be able to do nothin' with that hand fer a spell. Yessir! I got lost—that's what I did. One tree looks pretty much like another to me; and one old rock it's jest the same as the next one. I reckon I've walked twenty mile sence sunup."

He paused in sudden panic; but the other did not ask him whence he had walked nor whither he was walking. Instead, he ventured, in his serious tones, as the silence grew oppressive:

"You're mighty handy 'bout this sort o' thing. I reckon I'll have a tough time here alone till that hand heals."

"Oh, I'll stay with you a while," Kerry put in, hastily. "I ain't a-goin' on, a-leavin' a man in sech a fix, when I ain't got nothin' in particular to do an' nowheres in particular to go," he concluded, rather lamely.

His host's eyes dwelt on him. "Well, now, that 'd be mighty kind in you, stranger," he began, gently; and added, with the mountaineer's deathless hospitality, "You're shorely welcome."

In Kerry's pocket a pair of steel handcuffs clicked against each other. Any moment of the time that he was dressing the outlaw's hand, identifying at short range a dozen marks enumerated in the description furnished him, he could have snapped them upon those great wrists and made his host his prisoner. Yet, an hour later, when the big man had told him of a string of fish tied down in the branch, of a little cellarlike contrivance by the spring which contained honeycomb and some cold corn-pone, the two men sat at supper like brothers.

"Ye don't smoke?" inquired Kerry, commiseratingly, as his host twisted off a great portion of home-cured tobacco.

"Lord! ye'll never know what the weed is till ye burn it. A chaw 'll do when you're in the trenches an' afraid to show the other fellers where to shoot, so that ye dare not smoke. Ah-h-h! I've had it taste like nectar to me then; but tobacco's never tobacco till it's burnt," and the Irishman smiled fondly upon his stumpy black pipe.

They sat and talked over the fire (for a fire is good company in the mountains, even of a midsummer evening) with that freedom and abandon which the isolation, the hour, and the circumstances begot. Kerry had told his name, his birthplace, the habits and temperament of his parents, his present hopes and aspirations—barring one; he had even sketched an outline of Katy—Katy, who was waiting for him to save enough to buy that little farm in the West; and his host, listening in the unbroken silence of deep sympathy, had not yet offered even so much as his name.

Then the bed was divided, a bundle of fern and pine boughs being disposed in the opposite corner of the cave for the newcomer's accommodation. Later, after good-nights had been exchanged and Kerry fancied that his host was asleep, he himself stirred, sat up, and

being in uneasy need of information as to whether the cave door should not be stopped in some manner, opened with a hesitating, "Say!"

"You might jest call me Andy," the deep voice answered, before the mountain-man negatived the proposition of adding a front door to the habitation.

Kerry slept again. Mountain air and weariness are drugs potent against a bad conscience, and it was broad daylight outside the cave when he wakened. He was a little surprised to find his host still sleeping, yet his experience told him that the wound was of a nature to induce fever, followed by considerable exhaustion. As the Irishman lifted his coat from where he had had it folded into a bundle beneath his head, the handcuffs in the pocket clicked, and he frowned. He stole across to look at the man who had called himself Andy, lying now at ease upon his bed of leaves, one great arm underneath his head, the injured hand nursed upon his broad breast. Those big eyes which had so appalled Kerry upon a first view yesterday were closed. The onlooker noted with a sort of wonder how sumptuous were the fringes of their curtains, long and purple-black, like the thick, arched brows above. To speak

truly, Kerry, although he was a respectable member of the police force, had the artistic temperament. The harmony of outline, the justness of proportion in both the face and figure of the man before him, filled the Irishman with delight; and the splendid virile bulk of the mountain-man appealed irresistibly to the other's masculinity. The little threads of silver in the tempestuous black curls seemed to Kerry but to set off their beauty.

"Gosh! but you're a good-looker!" he muttered. And putting his estimate of the man's charm into such form as was possible to him, he added, under his breath, "I'd hate to have sech a feller as you tryin' to court my Katy."

This was the first of many strange days; golden September days they were, cool and full of the ripened beauty of the departing summer. Kerry's host taught him to snare woodcock and pheasants—shoot them the Irishman could not, since the excitement of the thing made him fire wild.

"Now ain't that the very divil!" he would cry, after he had let his third bird get away unharmed. "Ef I was shootin' at a man, I'd be as stiddy as a clock. Gad! I'd be cool as an ice-wagon. But when that little old

brown chicken scoots a-scutterin' up out o' the grass like a hummin'-top, it rattles me." His teacher apparently took no note of the significance contained in this statement; yet Kerry's very ears were red as it slipped out, and he felt uneasily for the handcuffs, which no longer clinked in his pocket, but now lay carefully hidden under his fern bed.

There had been a noon-mark in the doorway of the cave, thrown by the shadow of a boulder beside it, even before the Irishman's big nickel watch came with its bustling, authoritative tick to bring the question of time into the mountains. But the two men kept uncertain hours: sometimes they talked more than half the night, the close-cropped, sandy poll and the unshorn crest of Jove-like curls nodding at each other across the fire, then slept far into the succeeding day; sometimes they were up before dawn and off after squirrels—with which poor Kerry had no better luck than with the birds. Every day the Irishman dressed his host's hand; and every day he tasted more fully the charm of this big, strong, gentle, peaceful nature clad in its majestic garment of flesh.

"If he'd 'a' been an ugly, common-looking brute, I'd 'a' nabbed him in a

minute," he told himself, weakly. And every day the handcuffs under the dried fern-leaves lay heavier upon his soul.

On the 20th of September, which Kerry had set for his last day in the cave, he was moved to begin again at the beginning and tell the big mountaineer all his affairs.

"Ye see, it's like this," he wound up: "Katy — the best gurrl an' the purtiest I ever set me two eyes on— she's got a father that 'll strike her when the drink's with him. He works her like a dog, hires her out and takes every cent she earns. Her mother—God rest her soul!—has been dead these two years. And now the old man is a-marryin' an' takin' home a woman not fit fer my Katy to be with. I says when I heard of it, says I: 'Katy, I'll take ye out o' that hole. I'll do the trick, an' I'll git the reward, an' it's married we'll be inside of a month, an' we'll go West.' That's what brought me up here into the mountains — me that was born, as ye might say, on the stair-steps of a tenement-house, an' fetched up the same."

Absorbed in the interest of his own affairs, the Irishman did not notice what revelations he had made. Whether or not this knowledge was new to his host

the uncertain light of the dying fire upon that grave, impassive face did not disclose.

"An' now," Kerry went on, "I've been thinkin' about Katy a heap in the last few days. I'm goin' home to her tomorry—home to Philadelphy—goin' with empty hands. An' I'm a-goin' to say to her, 'Katy, would ye rather take me jest as I am, out of a job'—fer that's what I'll be when I go back,—'would ye rather take me so an' wait fer the little farm?' I guess she'll do it; I guess she'll take me. I've got that love fer her that makes me think she'll take me. Did ye ever love a woman like that?"—turning suddenly to the silent figure on the other side of the fire. "Did ye ever love one so that ye felt like ye could jest trust her, same as you could trust yourself? It's a—it—well, it's a mighty comfortable thing."

The mountaineer stretched out his injured hand, and examined it for so long a time without speaking that it seemed as though he would not answer at all. The wound was healing admirably now; he had made shift to shoot, with Kerry's shoulder for a rest, and their larder was stocked with game once more. When he at last raised his head and looked

across the fire, his black eyes were such wells of misery as made the other catch his breath.

Upon the silence fell his big, serious voice, as solemn and sonorous as a church-bell: "You ast me did I ever love an' trust a woman like that. I did—an' she failed me. I ain't gwine to call you fool fer sich; you're a town feller, Dan, with smart town ways; mebby your gal would stick to you, even ef you was in trouble; but me—"

Kerry made an inarticulate murmur of sympathy.

The voice went on. "You say you're goin' home to her with jest your two bare hands?" it inquired. "But why fer? You've found your man. What makes you go back that-a-way?"

Kerry's mouth was open, his jaw fallen; he stared through the smoke at his host as though he saw him now for the first time. Kerry belongs to a people who love or hate obviously and openly; that the outlaw should have known him from the first for a police officer, a creature of prey upon his track, and should have treated him as a friend, as a brother, appalled and repelled him.

"See here, Dan," the big man went on, leaning forward; "I knowed what

your arrant was the fust minute I clapped eyes on you. You didn't know whether I could shoot with my left hand as well as my right—I didn't choose you should know. I watched fer ye to be tryin' to put handcuffs on me any minute — after you found my right hand was he'pless."

"Lord A'mighty! You could lay me on my back with your left hand, Andy," Kerry breathed.

The big man nodded. "They was plenty of times when I was asleep—or you thort I was. Why didn't ye do it? Where is they? Fetch 'em out."

Unwilling, red with shame, penetrated with a grief and ache he scarce comprehended, Kerry dragged the handcuffs from their hiding-place. The other took them, and thereafter swung them thoughtfully in his strong brown fingers as he talked.

"You was goin' away without makin' use o' these?" he asked, gently.

Kerry, crimson of face and moist of eye, gulped, frowned, and nodded.

"Well, now," the mountain-man pursued, "I been thinkin' this thing over sence you was a-speakin'. That there gal o' yourn she's in a tight box. You're the whitest man I ever run up ag'inst.

You've done me better than my own brothers. My own brothers," he repeated, a look of pain and bitterness knitting those wonderfully pencilled brows above the big eyes. "Fer my part, I'm sick o' livin' this-a-way. When you're gone, an' I'm here agin by my lonesome, I'm as apt as not to put the muzzle o' my gun in my mouth an' blow the top o' my head off—that's how I feel most o' the time. I tell you what you do, Dan: you jest put these here on me an' take me down to Garyville—er plumb on to Asheville—an' draw your money. That 'll square up things fer you an' that pore little gal. What say ye?"

Into Kerry's sanguine face there surged a yet deeper red; his shoulders heaved; the tears sprang to his eyes; and before his host could guess the root of his emotion the Irishman was sobbing, furiously, noisily, turned away, his head upon his arm. The humiliation of it ate into his soul; and the tooth was sharpened by his own misdeeds. How many times had he looked at the great, kindly creature across the fire there and calculated the chances of getting him to Garyville?

Andy's face twisted as though he had bitten a green persimmon. "Aw! Don't

*cry!*" he remonstrated, with the mountaineer's quick contempt for expressed emotion. "My Lord! Dan, don't—"

"I'll cry if I damn please!" Kerry snorted. "You old fool! Me a-draggin' you down to Garyville! Me, that's loved you like a brother! An' never had no thought—an' never had no thought—Oh, hell!" he broke off, at the bitter irony of the lie; then the sobs broke forth afresh. To deny that he had come to arrest the outlaw was so pitifully futile.

"So ye won't git the money that-away?" Andy's big voice ruminated, and a strange note of relief sounded in it; a curious gleam leaped into the sombre eyes. But he added, softly: "Sleep on it, bud; I'll let ye change your mind in the mornin'."

"You shut your head!" screeched Kerry, fiercely, with a hiccough of wrenching misery. "You talk to me any more like that, an' I'll lambaste ye—er try to—big as ye are! Oh, damnation!"

The last night in the cave was one of gusty, moving breezes and brilliant moonlight, yet both its tenants slept profoundly, after their strange outburst of emotion. The first gray of dawn found them stirring, and Kerry making ready for his return journey. Together, as

heretofore, they prepared their meal, then sat down in silence to eat it. Suddenly the mountain-man raised his eyes, to whose grave beauty the Irishman's temperament responded like that of a woman, and said, quietly,

"I'm a-goin' to tell ye somethin', an' then I'm a-goin' to show ye somethin'."

Kerry's throat ached. In these two weeks he had conceived a love for his big, silent, gentle companion which rivalled even his devotion to Katy. The thought of leaving him helpless and alone, a common prey of reward-hunters, the remembrance of what Andy had said concerning his own despair beneath the terrible pressure of the mountain solitude, were almost more than Kerry could bear.

"Fust and foremost, Dan," the other began, when the meal was finished, "I'm goin' to tell ye how come I done what I done. Likely you've hearn tales, an' likely they was mostly lies. You see, it was this-a-way: Me an' my wife owned land j'inin'. The Turkey Track Minin' Company they found coal on it, an' was wishful to buy. Her an' me wasn't wed then, but we was about to be, an' we j'ined in fer to sell the land an' go West." His brooding eyes were on the fire; his voice —which had halted before the words

"my wife," then taken them with a quick gulp—broke a little every time he said "she" or "her." Kerry's heart jumped when he heard the mention of that little Western farm—why, it might have been in the very locality he and Katy looked longingly toward.

"That feller they sent down here fer to buy the ground—Dickert was his name; you've hearn it, I reckon?"

Kerry recognized the murdered man's name. He nodded, without a word, his little blue eyes helplessly fastened on Andy's eyes.

"Yes, Dickert 'twas. He was took with Euola from the time he put eyes on her—which ain't sayin' more of him than of any man 'at see her. But a town feller's hangin' round a mounting-gal hain't no credit to her. Euola she was promised to me. But ef she hadn't 'a' been, she wouldn't 'a' took no passin' o' bows an' complyments from that Dickert. I thort the nighest way out on't was to tell the gentleman that her an' me was to be wed, an' that we'd make the deeds as man an' wife, an' I done so."

Kerry looked at his host and wondered that any man should hope to tamper with the affections of her who loved him.

"Wed we was," the mountain-man

went on; and an imperceptible pause followed the words. "We rid down to Garyville to be wed, an' we went from the jestice's office to the office of this here Dickert. He had a cuss with him that was no better'n him; an' when it come to the time in the signin' that our names was put down, an' my wife was to be 'examined privately and apart'—ez is right an' lawful — ez to whether I'd made her sign or not, this other cuss steps with her into the hall, an' Dickert turns an' says to me, 'You git a thousand dollars each fer your land—you an' that woman,' he says.

"I never liked the way he spoke—besides what he said; an' I says to him, 'The bargain was made fer five thousand dollars apiece,' says I, 'an' why do we git less?'

"'Beca'se,' says he, a-swellin' up an' lookin' at me red an' devilish,—'beca'se you take my leavin's—you fool! I bought the land of you fer a thousand dollars each—an' there's my deed to it, that you jest signed—I reckon you can read it. Ef I sell the land to the company—it's none o' your business what I git fer it.'

"Well, I can't read—not greatly. I don't know how I knowed—but I did know—that he was gittin' from the com-

pany the five thousand dollars apiece that we was to have had. I seen his eye cut round to the hall door, an' I thort he had that money on him (beca'se he was their agent an' they'd trusted him so far) fer to pay me and Euola in cash. With that he grabbed up the deed an' stuffed it into his pocket. Lord! Lord! I could 'a' shook it out o' him—an' the money too—hit's what I would 'a' done if the fool had 'a' kep' his mouth shut. But I reckon hit was God's punishment on him 'at he had to go on sayin', 'Yes, you tuck my leavin's in the money, an' you've tuck my leavin's agin to-day.' Euola was jest comin' into the room when he said that, an' he looked at her. I hit him." He gazed down the length of his arm thoughtfully. "I ort to be careful when I hit out, bein' stronger than most. But I was mad, an' I hit harder than I thort. I reached over an' grabbed open the table drawer jest fer luck—an' thar was the money. I tuck it. The other cuss he was down on the floor, sorter whimperin' an' workin' over this feller Dickert; an' he begun to yell that I'd killed 'im. With that Euola she gives me one look—white ez paper she was—an' she says, 'Run, Andy honey. I'll git to ye when I kin.'"

The mountain-man was silent so long that Kerry thought he was done. But he suddenly said:

"She ketched my sleeve, jest ez I made to start, an' said: 'I'll come, Andy. Mind, Andy, *I'll come to ye, ef I live.*'" Then there was the silence of sympathy between the two men.

So that was the history of the crime—a very different history from the one Kerry had heard.

"Hit's right tetchy business—er has been—a-tryin' to take Andy Proudfoot," the outlaw continued; "but, Dan, I'd got mighty tired, time you come. An' Euola—"

Kerry rose abruptly, the memory hot within him of Proudfoot's offer of the night before. The mountaineer got slowly to his feet.

"They's somethin' I wanted to show ye, too, ye remember," he said. They walked together down the bluff, to where another little cavern, low and shallow, hid itself behind huckleberry-bushes. "I kep' the money here," Proudfoot said, kneeling in the cramped entrance and delving among the rocks. He drew out a roll of bills and fingered them thoughtfully.

"The reward, now, hit was fifteen hundred dollars—with what the State an'

company both give, warn't it? Dan, I was mighty proud ye wouldn't have it—I wanted to give it to ye this-a-way. I don't know as I've got any rights on Euola's money. I reckon I mought ax you fer to take it to her, ef so be you could find her. My half—you kin have it, an' welcome."

Fear was in Kerry's heart. "An' what 'll you be doin'?" he inquired, huskily.

"Me?" asked Andy, listlessly. "Euola she's done gone plumb back on me," he explained. "I hain't heard one word from her sence the trouble, an' I've got that far I hain't a-keerin' what becomes of me. I like you, Dan; I'd ruther you had the money—"

"Oh, my Gawd! Don't, Andy," choked the Irishman. "Let me think, man," as the other's surprised gaze dwelt on him. Up to this time all Kerry's faculties had been engrossed in what was told him, or that which went on before his eyes. Now memory suddenly roused in him. The woman he had seen back at Asheville, the woman who called herself Mandy Greefe, but whom the police there suspected of being Andy Proudfoot's wife, whom they had twice endeavored, unsuccessfully, to follow in long, secret

excursions into the mountains. What was the story? What had they said? That she was seeking Proudfoot, or was in communication with him; that was it! They had warned Kerry that the woman was mild-looking (he had seen her patient, wistful face the last thing as he left Asheville), but that she might do him a mischief if she suspected he was on the trail of her husband. "My Lord! Oh, my Lord! W'y, old man,—w'y, Andy boy!" he cried, joyously, patting the shoulder of the big man, who still knelt with the roll of money in his hands,— "Andy, she's waitin' fer you—she's true as steel! She's ready to go with you. Yes, an' Dan Kerry's the boy to git ye out o' this under the very noses o' that police an' detective gang at Asheville. 'Tis you an' me that 'll go together, Andy."

Proudfoot still knelt. His nostrils flickered; his eyes glowed. "Have a care what you're a-sayin'," he began, in a low, shaking voice. "Euola! Euola! You've saw me pretty mild; but don't you be mistook by that, like that feller Dickert was mistook. Don't you lie to me an' try to fool me 'bout her. One o' them fellers I shot had me half-way to Garyville, tellin' me she was thar—sick—an' sont him fer me."

Kerry laughed aloud. "Me foolin' you!" he jeered. "'Tis a child I've been in your hands, ye black, big, still, solemn rascal! Here's money a-plenty, an' you that knows these mountains—the fur side —an' me that knows the ropes. You'll lend me a stake f'r the West. We'll go together—all four of us. Oh Lord!" and again tears were on the sanguine cheeks.

# The Level of Fortune

BY ABBY MEGUIRE ROACH

SHE was the ambition of the younger girls and the envy of the less fortunate. Bessie Hall had *everything,* they said.

Her prettiness, indeed, was chiefly in slender plumpness and bloom. But it served her purpose as no classic mould would have done. She did not overestimate it. But she was probably better satisfied with it than with most of those conditions of her life that people were always telling her were ideal. They spoke of her as the only child in a way that implied congratulations on the undivided inheritance—and that reminded her how she had always wanted a sister. They talked of her idyllic life on a blue-grass stock-farm — when she was wheedling from her father a winter in Washington. They envied her often when they had the very thing she wanted—or, at least, she didn't have it. They enlarged on her

popularity, and she answered, "Oh yes, nice boys, most of them, but—"

She had always said, "*When* I marry," not "*if*," and had said it much as she said, "When I grow up." And, yes, she believed in fate: that everybody who belonged to you would find you out; but —it was only hospitable to meet them half-way! So her admirers found her in the beginning hopefully interested, and in the end rather mournfully unconvinced. Her regret seemed so genuinely on her own account as well as theirs that they usually carried off a very kind feeling for her. She was equally open to enlistment in any other proposed diversion. For Bessie lived in a constant state of great expectation that something really nice would really happen to-morrow. There was always something wrong to-day.

"It's not fair!" she complained to Guy Osbourne, when he came to tell her good-by, all in the gray. "I'm positively discriminated against. If *I* have an engagement, it's sure to rain! And now just when I'm beginning to be a grown young lady, with a prospect *at last* of a thoroughly good time, a war has to break out!"

Her petulance was pretty. Guy laugh-

ed. "How disobliging!" he sympathized. "And how modest!" he added—which the reader may disentangle; Bessie did not. "*At last!*" he mocked her.

For Bessie Hall, whose community already moved in an orbit around her, and whose parents had, according to a familiar phrase, an even more circumscribed course around her little finger—for Bessie Hall to rail at fate was deliciously absurd, delightfully feminine!

When Bessie was most unreasonable one only wanted to kiss her. Guy's privileges in that line had passed with the days when he used to pick up bodily his lithe little playfellow to cross a creek or rain-puddled road. But to-day seemed pleasantly momentous; it called for the unusual. "I say, Bibi, when a knight went off to fight, you know, his lady used to give him a stirrup-cup at good-by. Don't you think it would be really sweet of you—"

She held off, only to be provoking. She would have thought no more of kissing Guy than a brother—or she thought she wouldn't. To be sure, she hadn't for years; there was no occasion; and then, of course, one didn't. She laughed and shook her head, and retreated laughing. And he promptly captured her. . . . She

freed herself, suddenly serious. And Guy stood sobered—sobered not at going to the war, but at leaving her.

"There now, run along."

"Well, good-by." But he lingered. There was nothing more to say, but he lingered. "Well, good-by. Be good, Bibi."

"It looks as if that was all I'd have a chance to be." The drawl of the light voice with its rising inflection was so engaging, no one called it nasal. "And it's so much more difficult and important to be charming!"

He was sobered at leaving her, but he never thought of not going with the rest. He went, and all the rest. And Bessie found herself, just when nature had crowned her with womanhood, a princess without a kingdom. To be sure, living on the border gave her double opportunities, and for contrasting romances. There were episodes that comforted her with the reflection that she was not getting wholly out of practice in the arts. And there was real adventure in flying and secret visits from Guy and the rest—Guy, who was never again just the same with her; but, for that matter, neither was she just the same with him. But, on the whole, as she pouted to him after-

ward, she wouldn't call that four years' war exactly entertaining!

The Halls personally did not suffer so deeply as their neighbors except from property loss. All they could afford, and more, they gave to the South, and the Northern invader took what was left. When there was nothing left, he hacked the rosewood furniture and made targets of the family portraits, in the mere wantonness of loot that, as a recriminative compliment, cannot be laid to the charge of any one period or section. Most of the farm negroes crossed the river. Funds ran low.

There had been ease and luxury in the family always, and just when Bessie reached the time to profit by them she remarked that they failed.

Even if the Halls were not in mourning, no one lives through such a time without feeling the common humanity. But Bessie, though she lingered on the brink of love as of all the other deeps of life—curious, adventurous, at once willing and reluctant—was still, in the end, quite steady.

When the war was over, the Halls were poor, on a competence of land run to waste, with no labor to work it, and no market to sell it. And Mr. Hall, like

so many of his generation, was too hampered by habit and crushed by reminiscence to meet the new day.

It was the contrast in Guy's spirit that won Bessie. His was indeed the immemorial spirit of youth—whether it be of the young world, or the young male, or the young South—to accept the issue of trial by combat and give loyalty to one proved equally worthy of sword or hand.

"We're whipped," he told her, "and that settles it. Now there's other work for us than brooding over it. All the same, the South has a future, Bibi, and that means a future for you and me."

"Not in the manufacture of poetry, I'm afraid," she laughed. "You dropped a stitch."

She did not seem to take his prowess, either past or to come, very seriously; and her eyebrows and her inflection went up at the assumption of the "we" in his plans. But—she listened.

His definiteness was itself effective. She herself did not know what she wanted. Something was wrong; or rather, everything was. She was finding life a great bore. But what would be right, she couldn't say, except that it must be different.

Guy looked sure and seasoned as he poured out his plans; and together with the maturing tan and breadth from his rough life, there was an unconquerable boyishness in the lift of his head and the light of his eyes.

"This enthusiasm is truly beautiful!" she teased.

It was, in truth, infectious.

Why! it was love she had wanted. The four years had been so empty—without Guy.

She went into it alert, receptive, optimistic. But it nettled her that everybody should be so congratulatory, and nobody surprised. It wasn't what *she* would call ideal for two impoverished young aristocrats to start life on nothing but affection and self-confidence.

It did seem as if the choicest fruit always came to *her* specked.

"Never mind," Guy encouraged her. "Just give me ten years. It will be a little hard on you at first, Bibi dear, I know, but it would be harder at your father's now. And it won't be long!"

There was only one comment of whose intention Bessie was uncertain: "So Guy is to continue carrying you over the bad places, Bessie?"

Hm! She had been thinking it rather

a fine thing for *her* to do. And that appealed to her.

"And think what an amusing anecdote it will make after a while, Guy,—how, with all your worldly goods tied up in a red bandanna, and your wife on your arm instead of her father's doorstep, you set out to make your fortune, and to live meanwhile in the City of Un-Brotherly Love!"

But Bessie had the standards of an open-handed people to whom economy was not a virtue. There had always been on her mother's table for every meal "salt-risin' light bread" and corn pone or griddle-cakes, half a dozen kinds of preserves, the staples in proportion. Her mother would have been humiliated had there been any noticeable diminution in the supply when the meal was over; and she and the cook would have had a council of war had a guest failed to eat and praise any single dish.

Bessie had not realized how inglorious their meagreness would be, until Mrs. Grey, at the daughter's table, grew unctuously reminiscent about the mother's.

"Dear me!" Guy tried afterward to comfort the red eyelids and tremulous lips, "do you want a table so full it takes your appetite at sight?"

"I'm afraid I can't joke about disgrace!" Bessie quivered.

"But, Bibi dear, Mrs. Grey is simply behind the times. The *rationale* of those enormous meals was not munificence, but that a horde of house-servants had to be fed at a second table."

Certainly Guy and his good spirits were excellent company. And Bessie came of a race of women used to gay girlhoods and to settling down thereafter, as a matter of course, into the best of house-mothers.

But there was a difference between the domestic arts she had been taught as necessary to the future lady of a large household and the domestic industries she had to practise. Supervising and doing were not the same. For her mother, sewing and cooking had been accomplishments; for her they were work. She had to do things a lady didn't do.

However, she was as fastidious about what she did for herself as about what was done for her. She was quick and efficient. People said Bessie Osbourne had the dearest home in town, was the best housekeeper, the most nicely dressed on nothing. You might know Bessie Hall would have the best of everything!

And when Bessie began to wonder if

that was true, she had entered the last circle of disappointment.

The fact was that, after the first novelty, things seemed pretty much the same as before. Bessie Osbourne was not so different from Bessie Hall. She might have appreciated that as significant; but doubtless she had never heard the edifying jingle of the unfortunate youth who "wandered over all the earth" without ever finding "the land where he would like to stay," and all because he was injudicious enough to take "his disposition with him everywhere he went." It was as if she had been going in a circle from right to left, and, after a blare of drums and trumpets and a stirring "About—face!" she had found herself going in the same circle from left to right. It all came to the same thing, and that was nothing. Guy was apparently working hard; but, after all, in real life it seemed one did not plant the adepts' magic seed that sprouted, grew, bloomed, while you looked on for a moment. For herself, baking and stitching took all her time, without taking nearly all her interest, or seeming to matter much when all was said and done. If she neglected things, they went undone, or some one else did them; in any case Guy never complained. If she

did what came up, each day was filled with meeting each day's demands. All their lives went into the means and preparation for living. Other people—Or was it really any different with them? Nine-tenths of the people nine-tenths of the time seemed to accomplish only a chance to exist. She had heard women complain that such was the woman's lot in order that men might progress. But it struck her very few men worked beyond the provision of present necessities, either. Was it all a myth, then—happiness, experience, romance? Was this all there was to life and love? What was the sense, the end? Her dissatisfaction reproached the Cosmos, grew to that *Weltschmerz* which is merely low spirits and reduced vitality, not "an infirmity of growth."

She constantly expected perfection, and all that fell below it was its opposite extreme, and worthless. She began to suspect herself of being an exceptional and lofty nature deprived of her dues.

Guy was a little disappointed at her prudent objection to children until their success was established. Prudence was mere waste of time to his courage and assurance. And he believed, though without going into the psychology of the

situation, that Bessie would be happier with a child or two.

"Oh, how can we do any more?" she answered, in her pretty, spoiled way. "We're trying to cut a two-yard garment out of a one-yard piece now." At least, she was; and so Guy was.

Well, it wasn't a great matter yet. It is not in the early years of marriage that that lack is most felt. And Bessie was not very strong; she never seemed really well any more. She developed a succession of small ailments, lassitudes, nerves. She dragged on the hand of life, and complained. The local physician drugged her with a commendable spirit of optimism and scientific experiment. But the drawl of the light voice with its rising inflection became distinctly a whine.

She got a way of surprising Guy and upsetting his calculations with unannounced extravagances. "What's the good of all this drudgery? We're making no headway, getting nowhere; we might as well have what good we can as we go along."

There was a negro woman in the kitchen now, and in the sitting-room one of the new sewing-machines. And Guy, who, so far, had been only excavating for the cellar of his future business

house, was beginning to feel that good foundation walls were about to start.

But, even when peevish, Bessie had a way of turning up her eyes at him that reduced him to helplessness and adoration. And she was delicate! "I know," he sympathized with her loyally, "it's like trying to work and be jolly with a jumping tooth; or rather, in your case, with a constant buzzing in your head."

The jumping tooth was his own simile. The headaches that had begun while he was soldiering were increasing. He had intermittent periods of numbness in the lower half of his body. It was annoying to a busy man. He could offer no explanation, nor could the doctors. "Overwork," they suggested, and advised the cure that is of no school—"rest." That was "impossible." Besides, it was all nonsense. He put it aside, went on, kept it from Bessie.

The end came, as it always does, even after the longest expectation, with a rush. He was suffering with one of his acute headaches one night, when Bessie fell asleep beside him. She woke suddenly, with no judgment of time, with a start of terror, a sense of oppression, or—death?

"Guy!" she screamed.

The strangeness of his answering voice only repeated the stab of fear. She was on her feet, had made a light. . . .

He was not suffering any more. He was perfectly conscious and rational. But from the waist down he could not move nor feel.

The doctors came and talked a great deal and said little; they reminded them that not much was known of this sort of thing; they would be glad to do what they could. . . .

"You don't mean to say this is permanent? Paralyzed? I? Oh, absurd!" Awful things happened to other people, of course—scandal, death—but to one's self— "Oh, it doesn't sound true! It can't be true. Paralyzed? *I?*"

And Bessie wondered why this had been sent on *her.*

The explanation was hit on long afterward, when in one of his campaign stories Guy mentioned a fall from his horse, with his spine against a rock, that had laid him unconscious for twenty-two hours.

And so the war, which had been responsible for their starting together with only a past and a future, was responsible for their having shortly only a past. Guy was not allowed his ten years.

Though he had now less actual pain, the shock seemed to jar the foundations of his life, and the sharp change in the habits of an active and vigorous body seemed to wreck his whole system. For months and months and months he seemed only a bundle of exposed nerves—that is, where he had any movement or sensation at all.

Now a past, however escutcheoned and fame-enrolled, is even more starvation diet than a future of affection and self-confidence. No help was to be had from either of their homes; it was the day of self-help for all.

Bessie wondered why this had been sent on *her,* but she took a couple of boarders at once, she sold sponge-cake and beaten biscuit, she got up classes in bread-making. And Guy stopped her busy passing to draw her hand to his lips, or watched her with dumb eyes.

Several of her friends, after trying her sewing-machine, then still something of a novelty, ordered duplicates. Guy suggested as a joke that she charge the makers a commission.

"The idea of trading on friendship!" Bessie laughed.

"Oh, I don't know," Guy reflected, more seriously. "How about these

boarders, then? That's trading on hospitality."

It was one of those minute flashes of illumination that, multiplied and collected, become the glow of a new light, the signal of a revolution. The country was full of them in those days. The old codes were melting in the heat of change. Standards were fluid. Personally, it ended in Bessie's selling machines, first in her town, then in neighboring ones.

In the restlessness that youth thinks is aspiration for the ideal, particularly for the ideal love, is a large element of craving for place and interest. After her marriage, at least, Bessie might have had enough of both; but the obvious purpose was too limited to appeal to her. Now two appetites and the four seasons supplied motive enough for industry. There was nothing magnificent in this manifest destiny, but it had the advantage of being imperative and constant. It was no small tax on her acquired delicacy, but it gave less time for hunting symptoms. It did not answer the *Whence, Whither, and Why;* it pointedly changed the subject. Her work began to carry her out of herself.

"Bibi dear, what a sorry end to all my promises!"

She had been thinking just that herself, with a sense of injury and imposition; and she was used all her life to having people see everything as she saw it, from her side only. But Guy had just turned over to his few creditors the hole in the ground into which so far most of his work had gone. "Bibi dear, what a sorry end to all my plans!" was what she expected him to say. And what he did say and what he didn't, met surprised in her mind and surveyed each other.

"Oh, Guy!" she deprecated, suddenly ashamed. For the first time it occurred to her to wonder why this had been sent on *him*. With a rush of remorseful sympathy and appreciation, she slipped down beside his chair. "My poor old boy!"

He clung to her like a drowning man —Guy, who, after the first single cry at the blow, had been so self-contained (or self-repressed?) through it all!

She remembered that she had omitted a good many things lately.

"You're tired to-day," he said.

"Yes, I am." She caught at it hurriedly with apologetic self-defence. "I'm pretty constantly tired lately. And this morning Mrs. Grey was so trying. She doesn't understand her machine, and she

doesn't understand business, and she was *too* silly and stupid. I don't wonder you men laugh at us and don't want us in *your* affairs!"

"It's all hard on you, Bibi." There was a lump in his voice. It was the first time he had been able to speak of it.

"Yes;" her own throat was so strained that for a moment she could not go on. "But," it struck her again, "I don't suppose an unbiased observer would think it exactly festive for you."

And, to be sure, when one came to think of it, how, pray, was he to blame?

From that day there began to be more than necessity to her work, and more than work to carry her out of herself.

In the present of commercial femininity we have two types—one, the business man; the other, an individual without gender, impersonal, capable. She never does anything ill-bred, certainly, but one no more thinks of specifying that she is a lady than that her hair is black; it isn't the point.

Mrs. Osbourne, however, was always first of all a lady. With her, men kept their hats off and their coats on, and had an inclination to soften business with bows, and bargains with figures of speech. She was at once so patrician and so

gracious that women felt it a kind of social function to deal with her. The drawl of the light voice with its rising inflection was only gently plaintive. The pretty way was winning, and rather pathetic in her position; it drifted about her an aroma of story, and that had its own appeal. The unvarying black of dress and bonnet, with touches of white at neck and wrist, was refined, and made her rosy plumpness look sweeter. It was all an uninventoried part of her stock in trade. And she came to take the same satisfaction in returns in success and cash that she had taken as a girl in results in valentines and cotillion favors.

Mrs. Osbourne had all the traditions of her class and generation. She let her distaste of the situation be known. If it had been possible, she would have concealed it like a scandal. As it was, with very proud apology, she made the necessity of her case understood: her object was bread and butter, not any of these new Woman's Rights—unwomanly, bourgeoise!

Nevertheless, it was not only true that it suited her to be doing something with some point and result, but that the life of action and influence among people

suited her. The work came to interest her for itself as well as for its object; that interest was a factor in her success; and the success again both stimulated and further equipped her.

As she got into training and over the first sore muscles of mind and body, work began to strengthen her. The nerves and small ailments grew secondary, were overlooked, actually lessened. There need be nothing esoteric in saying that a vital interest in life is as essential to health as to happiness. One need consider only the practical and physical effects of interest and self-forgetfulness, serenity and self-resource.

Sometimes her increasing trade took her away for two or three days, as far as Louisville or Cincinnati. The thought of Guy followed her, a sweet pain. She found herself hurrying back to her bright prisoner, and because of both conditions the marvel of that brightness grew on her, together with certain embarrassed comparisons. More than anything else, she admired his strength where she had been weak.

His brightness seemed to her the most pathetic thing about him; it was so sorry. It was indeed the epitome of his tragedy. To be as unobtrusive as pos-

sible, and, when necessarily in evidence, as pleasant as possible, was the rôle he had assigned himself. It was the one thing he could do, the only thing he could do for her.

Doubtless the very controlling of the nervousness helped it. Moreover, his revolting organization was gradually adapting itself somewhat to the new conditions. Sensitive and uncertain tendrils of vitality began to creep out from the roots of a blighted vigor.

Bessie, increasingly perceptive, began to suspect that what she saw was the brightness after the storm. She wondered what his long solitary hours were like when she was away. What must they be, with him helpless, disappointed, lonely, liable to maddening attacks of nerves? But he assured her that he was perfectly comfortable; Mammy Dinah was faithful and competent; and he was really making headway with the German and French that he had taken up because he could put them down as need was, and because —they might come in, in some way, some time. "In heaven?" Bessie wondered secretly, but, enlightened by her own experience, saw the advantage of his being entertained.

"You're too much alone," she said,

feeling for the trouble. "And so am I," she added, thoughtfully. She should have noticed his eyes at that last. He had developed a sort of controlled voracity for endearment, but he never asked for it. In the old days he had taken his own masterfully, with no doubts. Now he waited. He did not starve. She cajoled him and coaxed his appetite and patted the pillows, and made pretty, laughing eyes at him and fate quite in her habitual manner. Her touch and tone of affection had never been so free. But in that very fact he found another sting.

"The better I do on the road, the more they keep me out," she was saying. "We can't go on this way. I've been thinking lately— Could you bear to go North, Guy, and to live in a city, among strangers? Perhaps at headquarters there might be an opening for me that would let me settle down."

"What! Cincinnati! Is there any such chance?"

"You'd *like* it? Why on earth— Are you so bored here?"

"Oh, Bibi, have you never thought of it? In a city there'd be some chance of something I could do!"

"You? Oh, Guy!" After she had

accepted the care of him, and that so pleasantly, he wasn't satisfied! "Is there anything you lack here?" She was hurt.

It was replaying the old parts reversed. Once *he* had grieved that he could not give her enough to content her.

"A—h—" He turned his head away and flung an arm up over his eyes.

She understood only that he was suffering. "But, Guy, there's nothing you could do, possibly. It's not to be expected. Have I complained?" She fell back on the kindly imbecility of the nurse. "Now you're not to worry about that, at least until you're better—"

"Better?" He forgot the lines in which he had schooled himself. The man overrode the amateur actor. "That's not the thing to hope for. Why couldn't it have killed me—that first fall?" ("My dear, my dear!" she stammered.) "There would have been some satisfaction in getting out of the way, and that in decent fashion; like a charge of powder, not like a rubbish-heap. I can't accept it of you, Bibi. I'm enraged for you. I can't be grateful. I'm ashamed."

She understood now.

What could she say? A dozen things, and she did; things about as satisfying as theology at the grave. He did not an-

swer nor respond. When he relaxed at last it was simply to her arms around him, his head on her bosom, her wordless notes of tenderness and consolation.

He was suffering, and chiefly for her, and what a fighter he was! Who but he would ever have thought of *his* doing anything?

So there might be cases in which it was really more helpful and generous not to do things for people, but to let them do for themselves. She couldn't fancy his doing enough to amount to anything. He oughtn't to! But if it would make him any happier he should have his make-believe—yes, and without knowing it was make-believe. Doing things that were of no value to any one was so disheartening. She knew. Like perfunctory exercise for your health.

Her own business in Cincinnati proved so brief as to take her breath. His was more difficult. The plough was still mightier than either sword or pen. Few markets were open to an inactive man whose hours must be short and irregular, and whose chief qualifications seemed to be a valiant spirit and a store of reminiscences, in a time when reminiscences were as easy to get as advice.

She was delayed in her return, growing

more and more anxious at the thought of his anxiety. When she boarded the south-bound train, she went down the aisle, looking for a seat, with her short steps hurried as if it would get her home sooner.

Mrs. Grey leaned over and motioned her, and as she sat down, looked critically at the bright eyes and pink cheeks. "You certainly do look well nowadays, Bessie."

Doubtless Bessie's color was partly excitement and rush.

"Oh, I'm well," absently.

"Funny kind of dyspepsia, wasn't it, to be cured by eating around, the way you have to do."

"Oh, dyspepsia!" The nettles brought back her attention. People needn't belittle her troubles! "I still have that dyspepsia. But if you had to be as busy as I, Mrs. Grey, you'd know that there are times when nothing but sudden death can interfere." Even Mrs. Grey's prickings, however, were washed over to-day by Balm of Gilead. "Still, it has come to something. The company has given me Cincinnati for my territory."

"Really?" Not that Mrs. Grey doubted her veracity. "Well, you always did succeed at anything you put your hand

to. It has been the most surprising thing! You know, I tell everybody, Bessie, that you deserve all the credit in the world for the way you have taken hold." Bessie stiffened; neither need they sympathize too much! "A girl brought up as you were, who always had the best of everything." *The best of everything!* The familiar phrase was like a bell, sending wave after wave of memory singing through Bessie's mind. "And still I never saw any one to whom the wind has been so tempered as to you: when you were sick you could afford it, and now that it's inconvenient— Things always did seem to work smoother with you, and come out better, than with any of the rest of us."

Bessie sat looking at her, and, in the speech, saw her own petulance of a moment before—any number of her own speeches, in fact, inverted, as things are in a glass. Indeed, Mrs. Grey had held up a reflector. Bessie had met herself. And she saw herself, as in a mirror-maze, from all angles, down diminishing perspectives, from the woman she was to the girl she had been.

She had been quite unconscious of the slow transformation in her habits of thought. It is so in life. One toils

up the thickly wooded hillside, intent only on the footing, and comes suddenly on a high clearing, overlooking valley and path, defining a new horizon.

"I never had the best of everything, Mrs. Grey," she said. "Nobody has. Every life and every situation in life has its bad conditions—and its good ones. I haven't had any more happiness—nor trouble than most people. It strikes me things are pretty equally divided. We only think they aren't when we don't know all about it. We see the surface of other people's lives, not their private drawbacks or compensations. There are always both. But other people's troubles are so much easier to bear than our own, their good luck so much less deserved and qualified! With all I had as a girl I didn't have contentment. And now, with all I lack, I don't know any one with whom I'd change places."

What was the use with Mrs. Grey?

But alone, the thought kept widening ring after ring: How little choice there was of conditions in life; how fortune tends to seek its level; how one man has the meat and another the appetite; and another, without either, can find in the fact the flavor of a joke or chew the cud of reflection over it. Of the three, Bessie

thought she would rather be the one with the disposition. But that could be cultivated. Look at hers! Circumstances had started it in a sort of aside, but she would take the hint.

The cure for dissatisfaction was to recognize one's balance of good.

Guy was watching for her at the window. She was half conscious that he looked unusually haggard, but there were so many other thoughts at sight of him that they washed over the first.

She swung her reticule. "It's all right!" and she ran up the walk, a most feminine swirl of progress. She got to him breathless. "I've found a house that will give you its German correspondence to translate and write, and it won't be so much but that you can do it as you're able, within reason. Now, sir!"

For a minute it seemed as if Guy's whole body was alive. The weak and shaken invalid still had something of unconquerable boyishness in the lift of his head and the light of his eyes. "Good! That will do for a start." The old spirit, to which hers always answered. If she didn't believe he would actually do something worth while in the end! Then promptly, of old habit, he thought of her. "Bibi! You took your time for that."

"Not all of it, in good sooth, fair lord." She spread out her skirts, lady-come-to-see fashion, and strutted across the room. "Mrs. Osbourne has a new 'job' and a 'raise.'" (Incidentally Mrs. Osbourne had never before been so advanced in her language.)

"Bully for you!" he shouted, so genuinely that she ran back to him and shook and hugged his shoulders. How she *liked* him!

"What a thorough girl you are, Bibi!"

"Oh, and to-day I've been laughing at myself; as silly as I used to be, counting so much on a mere change of circumstances. Of course something unpleasant will develop there too. But at least the harness will rub in a different place. On the whole, it will be better. Guy, do you know, I have just gotten rid of envy and discontent, and that without endangering ambition. I'll give you the charm; it's a sort of cabalistic *spell*—the four P's—Occu*p*ation, Res*p*onsibility, *P*urpose, and *P*hilosophy."

"Yes," he said, "the most worth-while thing in life is to feel you are accomplishing something — doing your work well and getting proportionate returns."

The tone touched her. "Poor old Guy!" so generously congratulatory of

her flaunted advantages. How stupid she was! Poor Guy! her pretty creed scattered at a breath like a dead dandelion-ball. Envy she had disposed of, but what about pity? What had he to make up? "The idea of my talking of happiness, with you caged here!"

"Perhaps that was the point of it all," he said, "to give you your chance."

"That would be a beautifully humble thing for me to think, now wouldn't it?" Yet she had once complained that the point of it all was to interfere with her. "And so sweetly generous. Your chance being—?"

"To serve as a means of grace to you?" He smiled. "I am glad to be of some use—and honored to be of that one!" he hurried to add, elaborately humorous.

But what she was noticing was the flagging effort of his vivacity. Her half-submerged first impression of him was coming to the surface: he did look unusually haggard. "You haven't been good while I was away. Now don't tell stories. Don't I know you? No more storms, Guy!" she warned.

His eye evaded hers. "I am seriously questioning whether you ought to make this change. All your friends are here."

"Oh, as to that! There might be

advantages in working among strangers. Mrs. Grey fairly puts herself out to let me understand that she is a friend in need!" She reined herself up, recollecting, but too late. "Oh, Guy, don't mind so for me. Why, the South is full of women doing what I am, only so many of them are doing it—without—the Guys who never came back!"

"Lucky dogs!" subterraneously. Then, seeing her apprehensive of a second flare-up of that volcanic fire: "So gentlemanly of them, too, Bibi. How can those few years of love be worth a life of this to you?"

"Those few years? why, Guy! of love? Is that how *you* feel?" Her eyes filled; her whole face quivered. "Oh, Guy—be willing for my sake. I never knew what love could mean until lately."

His grasp hurt her knuckles. "Yes, dear, I have seen. It's very sweet. It's the mother in you, Bibi, and my helplessness. Of course! What could a woman *love* in a dependent, half-corpse of a no-man?"

For a moment she was too surprised to speak. She stared at him. "What a notion! and it isn't true! You never were any more a man than you've been through these two dreadful years." She

sounded fairly indignant. "And for my part, I never appreciated what you were half as much."

"Love doesn't begin with a *P*," he remarked to the opposite wall.

"But what do you suppose the *purpose* was?"

"Love?"

"More. *You.*"

"You never told me." That strange voice and averted face!

"How should I fancy you wouldn't know? I had never thought it out myself until just now. It has simply been going on from day to day, as natural and quiet as growing—" A bewildering illumination was spreading in her mind. "Look here, young man"—she forced his face around to see it,—"what goblins have you been hatching in the night-watches?" The raillery broke. "Dear, is that what has been troubling you? Is there anything else?"

He looked at her now. "Anything else trouble me, if I really have you, and a chance to do a little something for you?"

It was their apotheosis. They had never known a moment equal to it before; could never know just another such again. In a very deep way it was the first kiss of love for them both.

Bessie came back to herself with that sense of arriving, of having been infinitely away, with which one drops from abstraction.

Where had they been in that state of absent mind?

It was as if they had met out of time, space, matter. . . . And as she thought of his words, in the light of his eyes, pity too was qualified, and that without endangering helpfulness. He, too, had his balance of good. Yes, things squared in the end.

Her creed was quick. The scattered dandelion seed sprouted all around her.

# Pap Overholt

BY ALICE MACGOWAN

UP and down the long corn rows Pap Overholt guided the old mule and the small, rickety, inefficient plough, whose low handles bowed his tall, broad shoulders beneath the mild heat of a mountain June sun. As he went—ever with a furtive eye upon the cabin—he muttered to himself, shaking his head:

"Say I sha'n' do hit. Say he don't want me a-ploughin' his co'n. My law! Whut you gwine do? Thar's them chillen—thar's Huldy. They got to be fed—they 'bleeged to have meat and bread. Ef I don't—"

Again he lifted his apprehensive glance toward the cabin; and this time it encountered a figure stepping from the low doorway—a young fellow with an olive face, delicately cut features, black curling hair, the sleep still lingering in his dark eyes. He approached the fence — the sorry, broken fence,—put his hands upon it, and called sharply, "Pap!"

The old man released the plough-handles and came toward the youth, shrinking like a truant schoolboy called up for discipline.

"Pap, this is the way you do me all the time—come an' plough in my co'n when I don't know nothin' about hit—when I don't want hit done,—tryin' to make everybody think I'm lazy and no 'count. Huldy tellin' me I ought to be ashamed of myse'f, in bed while my po' old pappy—'at hain't ploughed a row of his own for years—is a-gittin' my co'n outen the weeds."

The father stood, a chidden culprit. The boy had worked himself up to the desired point.

"You jest do hit to put a shame on me. Now, Pap, you take that mule—"

"W'y, Sammy, — w'y, Sammy honey, you know Pappy don't do it fer nair sech a reason. Hit don't look no sech a thing—like you was shif'less an' lazy. Hit jes look like Pappy got nothin' to do, an' love to come and give you a turn with yo' co'n; an', Sammy honey,"—the good farmer for the moment getting the better of the timid, soft-hearted parent,—"hit is might'ly in the weeds, boy. Don't you reckon I better jes—"

The other began, "I tell you—"

"There, there! Ne'mine, Sammy. Ef you don't want Pappy to plough no mo', Pappy jes gwine to take the plough right outen the furrow and put old Beck up. Pappy gwine—"

The boy turned away, his point made, and strolled back to the cabin. The old man, murmuring a mixture of apologies, assurances, and expostulations, went pathetically about the putting up of the mule, the setting away of the plough.

Nobody knew when Pap Overholt began to be so called, nor when his wife had received the affectionate title of Aunt Cornelia. It was a naming that grew of itself. Forty years ago the pair had been married—John, a sturdy, sunny-tempered young fellow of twenty-one, six feet in his stockings, broad of shoulder, deep of chest, and with a name and a nature clean of all tarnish; Cornelia Blackshears, a typical mountain girl of the best sort.

When, at the end of the first year, old Dr. Pastergood, who had ushered Cornelia herself into this world, turned to them with her first child in his arms, the young father stood by, controlling his great rush of primal joy, his boyish desire to do something noisy and violent; the mother looked first at her husband, then

into the old doctor's face, with eyes of passionate delight and appeal. He was speechless a moment, for pity. Then he said, gently:

"Hit's gone, befo' hit ever come to us, Cornely. Hit never breathed a breath of this werrisome world."

A man who had practised medicine in the Turkey Tracks for twenty-five years —a doctor among these mountain people, where poverty is the rule, hardship a condition of life, and tragedy a fairly familiar element, would have had his fibre well stiffened. The brave old campaigner, who had sat beside so many death-beds and so many birth-beds, and had seen so many come and so many go, at the exits and entrances of life, met the matter stoutly and without flinching. His stoic air, his words of passive acceptance, laid a calm upon the first outburst of bitter grief from the two young creatures. Later, when John had gone to do the chores, the old doctor still sat by Cornelia's bed. He took the girl's hand in his—an unusual demonstration of feeling for a mountaineer—and said to her, gently,

"Cornely, there won't never be no mo' — there'll be nair another baby to you, honey."

The stricken girl fastened her eyes upon his in dumb pain and protest. She said nothing, the wound was too deep; only her lips quivered pitifully and the tears ran down upon the pillow.

"Now, now, honey, don't ye go to fret that-a-way. W'y, Cornely, ye was made for a mother; the Lord made ye for such —an' do ye 'low 'at He don't know what He's a-gwine to do with the work of His hands? 'For mo' air the children of the desolate'—don't ye know Scripter says? —than of them that has many. Lord love ye, honey, girl, you'll be mother to a minny and a minny. They air a-comin'; the Lord's a-sendin' 'em. W'y, honey,—you and John will have children gathered around you—"

The one cry broke forth from Cornelia which she ever uttered through all her long grief of childlessness: "Oh, but, Dr. Pastergood, I wanted mine—my own—and John's! Oh, I reckon it was idolatry the way I felt in my heart; I thought, to have a little trick—bone o' my bone, flesh o' my flesh—look up at me with John's eyes—" A sob choked her utterance, and never again was it resumed.

In the years that followed, the pair—already come to be called Pap Overholt and Aunt Cornely—well fulfilled the old

doctor's prophecy. The very next year after their baby was laid away, John's older brother, Jeff, lost his wife, and the three little children Mandy left were brought at once to them, remaining in peace and welfare for something over a year (Jeff was a circumspect widower), making the place blithe with their laughter and their play. Then their father married, and they were taken to the new home. He was an Overholt too, and shared that powerful paternal instinct with John. Three times this thing happened. Three times Jeff buried a wife, and the little Jeff Overholts, with recruited ranks, were brought to Aunt Cornelia and Pap John. When Jeff married his fourth wife—Zulena Spivey, a powerful, vital, affluent creature, of an unusual type for the mountains,—and the children (there were nine of them by this time) went to live with their stepmother, whose physique and disposition promised a longer tenure than any of her predecessors, Pap and Aunt Cornelia sat upon the lonely hearth and assured each other with tears that never again would they take into their home and their lives, as their very own, any children upon whom they could have no sure claim.

"Tell ye, Cornely, this thing o' windin' yer heart-strings around and around a passel o' chaps for a year or so and then havin' 'em tore out—well, hit takes a mighty considerable chunk o' yer heart along with 'em." And the wife, looking at him with wet eyes, nodded an assent.

It was next May that Pap Overholt, who had been doing some hauling over as far as Big Turkey Track, returned one evening with a little figure perched beside him on the high wagon seat. "The Lord sent him, honey," he said, and handed the child down to his wife. "He ain't got a livin' soul on this earth to lay claim to him. He is ourn as much as ef he was flesh and bone of us. I even tuck out the papers."

That evening, the two sitting watching the little dark face in its sleep, Pap told his story. Driving across the flank of Yellow Old Bald, beyond Lost Cabin, he had passed a woman with five children sitting beside the road in Big Buck Gap.

"Cornely, she looked like a picture out of a book," whispered Pap. "This chap's the livin' image of her. Portugee blood—a touch o' that melungeon tribe from over in the Fur Cove. She had a little smooth face shaped like a aig; that curly hair hangin' clean to her waist, dark

like this baby's, but with the sun all through it; these eyebrows o' his'n that's lifted in the middle o' his forred, like he cain't see why some onkindness was did him; and little slim hands and feet; all mighty furrin to the mountains. I give 'er a lift—she was goin' to Hepzibah, huntin' fer some kind o' charity she'd heard could be got there; and this little trick he tuck to me right then."

The woman bent over and looked long at the small olive face, so delicately cut, the damp rings of hair on his forehead, the tragic lift of the brows above the nose bridge, the thin-lipped scarlet mouth. "My baby," she murmured; then lifted her glance with the question: "An' how come ye to have him? Did she—did that womern—"

"No, no. 'Twas this-a-way," Pap interrupted her. "When I came back from Big Turkey Track, I went down through Hepzibah—I couldn't git this chap's eyes —ner his little hands—out o' my head; I found myse'f a-studyin' on 'em the hull enjurin' time. She was dead when I got thar. She'd died to Squire Cannon's, and they was a-passellin' out the chillen 'mongst the neighbors. No sooner I put foot on the po'ch 'n this little soul come a-runnin' to me, an' says: 'W'y, here's

my pappy, now. I tole you-all I did have a pappy. Now look—see—here he is.' Then he peeked up at me, and he put up his little arms, an' he says, jest as petted, and yit a little skeered, he says, 'Take me, pappy.' When I tuck him up, he grabbed me round the neck and dug his little face into mine. Then he looked around at all the folks, and sort o' shivered, and put his face back in my neck —still ez a little possum when you've killed the old ones an' split up the tree an' drug out the nest."

Both faces were wet with tears now. Pap went on: "I had the papers made right out—I knowed you'd say yes, Cornely. He's Samuel Ephraim Overholt. A-comin' home, the little weenty chap looks up at me suddent an' axes, 'Is they a mammy to we-all's house whar we goin' now?' Lord! Lord!" Pap shook his head gently, as signifying the utter inadequacy of mere words.

Little Sammy grew and thrived in the Overholt home. The tiny rootlets of his avid, unconscious baby life he thrust out in all directions through that kind soil, sucking, sucking, grasping, laying hold, drawing to him and his great little needs sustenance material and spiritual. More keen and capable to penetrate were

those thready little fibres than the irresistible water-seeking tap-root of the cottonwood or the mesquite of the plains; more powerful to clasp and to hold than the cablelike roots of the rock-embracing cedar. The little new member was so much living sunshine, gay, witching, brilliant, erratic in disposition as he was singular and beautiful in his form and coloring, but always irresistibly endearing, dangerously winning. When he had been Sammy Overholt only two weeks, he sat at table with his parents one day and scornfully rejected the little plate that was put before him.

"No!" he cried, sharply. "No, no! I won't have it—ole nassy plate!"

"W'y, baby! W'y, Sammy," deprecated Cornelia, "that's yo' own little plate that mammy washed for you. You mustn't call it naisty."

"Hit air nassy," insisted young Samuel. "Hit got 'pecks—see!" and the small finger pointed to some minute flaw in the ware which showed as little dots on the white surface.

Cornelia, who, though mild and serene, was possessed of firmness and a sense of justice, would have had the matter fairly settled. "He ort not to cut up this-a-way, John," she urged. "He ort to take

his little plate and behave hisse'f; 'r else he ort to be spanked,—he really ort, John, in jestice to the child."

But John was of another mould. "Law, Cornely! Hit's jest baby-doin's. The idee o' him a-settin' up 'at yo' dishes ain't clean! That shore do beat all!" And he had executed an exchange of plates under Cornelia's deprecating eyes. And so the matter went.

Again, upon a June day, Sammy was at play with the scion of the only negro family which had ever been known in all the Turkey Track regions. The Southern mountaineers have little affinity, socially or politically, with the people of the settlements. There were never any slaveholders among them, and the few isolated negroes were treated with almost perfect equality by the simple-minded mountain dwellers.

"Sammy honey, you an' Jimmy mus' cl'ar up yo' litter here. Don't leave it on mammy's nice flo'. Hit's mighty nigh supper-time. Cl'ar up now, 'fo' Pappy comes."

Sammy stiffened his little figure to a startling rigidity. "I ain't a-goin' to work!" he flung out. "Let him do it; *he's a nigger!*" And this was the last word of the argument.

This was Sammy—handsome, graceful, exceedingly winning, sudden and passionate, disdaining like a young zebra the yoke of labor, and, when crossed, absolutely beyond all reason or bounds; the life of every gathering of young people as he grew up; much made of, deferred to, sought after, yet everywhere blamed as undutiful and ungrateful.

"Oh, I do p'intedly wish the neighbors would leave us alone," sighed Pap Overholt, when these reports came to him. "As ef I didn't know what I wanted—as ef I couldn't raise my own chile;" and as he said this he ever avoided Aunt Cornelia's honest eye.

It was when Sammy was eighteen, the best dressed, the best horsed—and the idlest—to be found from Little Turkey Track to the Fur Cove, from Tatum's to Big Buck Gap—that he went one day, riding his sorrel filly, down to Hepzibah, ostensibly to do some errands for Aunt Cornelia, but in fact simply in search of a good time. The next day Blev. Straly, a rifle over his shoulder and a couple of hounds at heel, stopped a moment at the chopping-block where Pap was splitting some kindling.

"I was a-passin'," he explained—"I was jest a-passin', an' I 'lowed I'd drap in

an' tell ye 'bout Sammy. Hit better be me than somebody 'at likes to carry mean tales and wants to watch folks suffer." Aunt Cornelia was beside her husband now.

"No, no," Blev. answered the look on the two faces; "nothin' ain't the matter of Sammy. He's jest married—that little Huldy Frew 'at's been waitin' on table at Aunt Randy Card's *ho*-tel. You know, Aunt Cornely, she is a mighty pretty little trick—and there ain't nothin' bad about the gal. I jest knowed you and Pap 'ud feel mighty hurt over Sammy doin' you-all like you was cruel to him—like he had to run away to git married; and I 'lowed I better come and tell you fust."

The "little Huldy gal" was, as Blev. Straly had described her, a mighty pretty little trick, and nothing bad about her. The orphan child of poor mountaineers, bound out since the death of her parents when she was ten years old, she had been two years now working for Aunt Randy Card, who kept the primitive hotel at Hepzibah. Even in this remote region Huldy showed that wonderful—that irrepressible—upward impulse of young feminine America, that instinctive affinity for the finer things of life, that marvellous understanding of graces and refine-

ments, and that pathetic and persistent groping after them which is the marked characteristic of America's daughters. The child was not yet sixteen, a fair little thing with soft ashen hair and honest gray eyes, the pink upon her cheek like that of a New England girl.

At first this marriage—which had been so unkindly conducted by Sammy, used by him apparently as a weapon of affront—seemed to bring with it only good, only happiness. The boy was more contented at home, less wayward, and the feeling of apprehension that had dwelt continually in the hearts of Pap and Aunt Cornelia ever since his adolescence now slept. The little Huldy—her own small cup apparently full of happiness—was all affectionate gratitude and docility. She healed the bruises Sammy made, poured balm in the wounds he inflicted; she was sunny, obedient, grateful enough for two.

But a new trait was developed in Sammy's nature—perversity. Life was made smooth to his feet; the things he needed—even the things which he merely desired—were procured and brought to him. Love brooded above and around him—timid, chidden, but absolute, adoring. Nothing was left him—no occupa-

tion was offered for his energies—but to resent these things, to quarrel with his benefits. And now the quarrel began.

Its outcome was this: Toward the end of the first year of the marriage, upon a bleak, forbidding March day—a day of bitter wind and icy sleet,—there rode one to the Overholt door who called upon Pap and Aunt Cornelia to hitch up and come with all possible haste to old Eph'm Blackshears, Cornelia's father — a man who had lived to fourscore, and who now lay at his last, asking for his daughter, his baby chile, Cornely.

For days Sammy had been in a very ill-promising mood; but he brightened as the foster-parents drove away in the bleak, gray, hostile forenoon, Huldy helping Aunt Cornelia to dress and make ready, tucking her lovingly into the wagon and beneath the thick old quilt.

The elder woman yearned over the girl with a mother's compassionate tenderness. Both Aunt Cornelia and Pap John looked with a passionate, delighted anticipation to when they would have their own child's baby upon their hearth. It was the more notable marks of this tenderness, of this joyous anticipation, which Sammy had begun to resent—the gifts and the labors showered upon the

young wife in relation to her coming importance, which he had barely come short of refusing and repelling. "Whose wife is she, I'd like to know? Looks like I cain't do nothin' for my own woman —a-givin' an' a-givin' to Huldy, like she was some po' white trash, some beggar!" But he had only "sulled," as his mother called it, never quite able to reach the point he desired of actually flinging the care, the gifts, and the loving labors back in the foster-parents' faces.

Pappy Blackshears passed away quietly in the evening; and when he had been made ready for his grave by Cornelia's hands, her anxiety for the little daughter at home would not let her remain longer.

"I'm jest 'bleeged to go to Huldy," she explained to the relatives and neighbors gathered at the old Blackshears place. "I p'intedly dassent to leave her over one night—and not a soul with her but Sammy, and he nothin' but a chile—and not a neighbor within a mild of our place—and sech a night! Pap and me we'll hitch up an' mak' 'as'e back to Huldy. We'll be here to the funeral a Sunday—but I dassent to stay away from Huldy nair another hour now." And so, at ten o'clock that bitter night, Pap and Aunt Cornelia came hurrying home.

As the wagon drove up the mountain trail to the house, the hounds came belling joyously to meet them; but no light gleamed cheerfully from the windows; no door was flung gayly open; no little Huldy cried out her glad greeting. Filled with formless apprehensions, Pap climbed over the wheel, lifted Cornelia down, and dreading they knew not what, the two went,—holding by each other's hand, — opened the door, and entered, shrinking and reluctant. They blew the smouldering coals to a little flame, piled on light-wood till the broad blaze rolled up the chimney, then looked about. No living soul was in any room. Finally Cornelia caught sight of a bit of paper stuck upon the high mantel. She tore it down, and the two read slowly and laboriously together the few lines written in Sammy's hand:

"I ain't going to allow my wife to live off any man's charity. I ain't going to be made to look like nothing in the eyes of people any longer. I've taken my wife to my own place, where I can support her myself. I had to borrow your ox-cart and steers to move with, and Huldy made me bring some things she said mother had give her, but I'll pay all this

back, and more, for I intend to be independent and not live on any man's bounty.

Respectfully, your son,

SAMUEL."

The two old faces, pallid and grief-struck, confronted each other in the shaken radiance of the pine fire.

"Oh, my po' chile, my po' little Huldy! Whar? His own place! My law!—whar? Whar has he drug that little soul?"

An intuition flashed into Pap Overholt's mind. He grasped his wife's arm. "W'y, Cornely," he cried, "hit's that cabin on The Bench! Don't ye know, honey? I give him that land when he was sixteen year old,—time he brung the prize home from the school down in the settlemint."

"The Bench! Oh, Lord—The Bench! W'y, hit 'll be the death of her. John, we cain't git to her too quick." And she ran from cupboard to press, from press to chest, from chest to bureau drawer, piling into John's arms the flask of brandy, the homely medicines, the warm garments, such bits of food as she could catch up that were palatable and portable. Pap, with more vulnerable emotions and less resolute nature, was incapable of speech; he could only suffer dumbly.

Arrived at the abandoned cabin on The Bench, the picture that greeted them crushed Pap's soft heart to powder, but roused in Aunt Cornelia a rage that would have resulted in a sharp settlement with Sammy, had it not been that, now as always, to reach the offender a blow must go through that same pitiful heart of John's. The young people had not long been at the cabin when the parents arrived. The little Huldy, moaning piteously, with a stricken, terrified look in her big, childish eyes, was crouched upon the floor beside a rickety chair. Sammy, sullen and defiant, was at the desolate hearth, fumbling with unskilled hands at the sodden chunks of wood he had there gathered.

The situation was past words. Pap, after one look at Huldy, went about the fire-building, the slow tears rolling down his cheeks. While Aunt Cornelia brought the bedding, the warm blankets and wrappings, and made the little suffering creature a comfortable couch, Pap wrought at the forlorn, gaping fireplace like a suffering giant. When the leaping flames danced and shouted up the chimney till the whole cabin was filled with the physical joy of their light and warmth, when steaming coffee and the hastily fetched

food had been served to the others, and the little wife lay quietly for the moment, the two elders talked together outside where a corner of the cabin cut off the driving sleet. Then Sammy was included, and another council was held, this time of three.

No. He would not budge. That was *his* wife. A fellow that was man enough to have a wife ought to be man enough to take keer of her. He wasn't going to have his child born in the house of charity. There was no thoroughfare. Sammy was allowed to withdraw, and the council of two was resumed. As a result of its deliberations, Pap John drove away through the darkness and the sleet. By midnight two trips had been made between the big double log house at the Overholt place and the wretched cabin on The Bench, and all that Sammy would suffer to be brought to them or done for them had been brought and done. The cabin was, in a very humble way, inhabitable. There was food and a small provision for the immediate present. And here, upon that wild March night of screaming wind and sleet, and with only Aunt Cornelia as doctor and nurse, Huldy's child was born.

And now a new order of things began.

Sammy's energies appeared to be devoted to the thwarting of Pap Overholt's care and benefits. There should be no cow brought to the cabin; and so Pap John, who was getting on in years now, and had long since given up hard, active work, hastened from his bed at four o'clock in the morning, milked a cow, and carried the pail of fresh milk to Huldy and the baby, furtively, apologetically. The food, the raiment, everything had to be smuggled into the house little by little, explained, apologized for. The land on The Bench was rich alluvial soil. Sammy, in his first burst of independence, ploughed it (borrowing mule and plough from a neighbor—the one neighbor ever known to be on ill terms with Pap Overholt), and planted it to corn. He put in a little garden, too; while Pap had achieved the establishment of a small colony of hens (every one of whom, it appeared, laid two or three eggs each day—at least that was the way the count came out).

The baby thrived, unconscious of all the grief, the perverse cruelty, the baffled, defeated tenderness about her, and was the light of Pap Overholt's doting eyes, the delight of Aunt Cornelia's heart. When she was eighteen months old, and could toddle about and run to meet them,

and chattered that wonderful language which these two hearts of love had all their lives yearned to hear—the dialect of babyhood,—the twin boys came to the cabin on The Bench. And Pap Overholt's lines were harder than ever. Cornelia had sterner stuff in her. She would have called a halt.

"Oh, John!" she expostulated finally, when she saw her husband come home crestfallen one day, with a ham which Sammy had detected him smuggling into the cabin and ordered back,—"John honey, ef you was to stop toting things to the cabin and let it all alone—not pester with it another—"

"Cornely, Cornely!" cried Pap John, "you know Sammy cain't no mo' keep a wife and chillen than a peckerwood kin. W'y, they'd starve! Huldy and the chaps would jest p'intedly starve."

"No, they won't, John. Ef you could master yo' own soft heart—ef you could stay away (like he's tole ye a minny a time to do, knowin' 'at you was safe not to mind him)—Sammy would stop this here foolishness. He'd come to his senses and be thankful for what the Lord sent, like other people. W'y, John—"

"Cornely honey—don't. Don't ye say another word. I tell ye, this last year

there's a feelin' in my throat and in my breast—hyer,"—he laid his hand pathetically over his heart,—"a cur'us, gone, flutterin' feelin'. And when Sammy r'ars up and threatens he'll take Huldy and the chaps—you know,"—he finished with a gesture of the hand and a glance of unspeakable pain,—"when he does that 'ar way, or something comes at me sudden like that—that we may lose 'em, hit seems like—right hyer,"—and his hand went again to his heart,—"that I can't bear it—that hit 'll take my life."

This was the last time Cornelia ever remonstrated with Pap John. She had a little talk with the new doctor from Hepzibah who had succeeded old Dr. Pastergood; and after that John was added to the list of her anxieties. He might carry the milk to the cabin on The Bench; he might slip in, when he deemed Sammy away—or asleep—and plough the corn; she saw the tragic folly of it, but must be silent. And so on that particular June morning, when Pap had put up the mule, clambered down the short-cut footway from The Bench to the old house, stopping several times to shake his head again and murmur to himself—"Whut you gwine do? There's them chaps; there's Huldy. Mustn't plough his

co'n; mustn't take over air cow. Whut you gwine do?"—Aunt Cornelia's seeing eye noted his perturbation the moment he came in at the door. With tender guile she built up a considerable argument in the matter of a quarterly meeting which was approaching—the grove quarterly, in which Pap John was unfailingly interested, and during which there were always from two to half a dozen preachers, old and young, staying with them. So she led him away—ever so little away—from his ever-present grief.

It was the next day that he said to her, "Cornely, I p'intedly ain't gwine to suffer this hyer filchin' o' co'n them Fusons is a-keepin' up on me."

"Is the Fusons a-stealin' yo' co'n, John?" she responded, in surprise. "W'y, they got a-plenty, ain't they?"

"Well, no, not adzactly,—that is to say, Buck Fuson ain't got a-plenty. He too lazy and shif'less to make co'n of his own; and he like too well to filch co'n from them he puts his spite on. Buck Fuson he tuck a spite at me, last time the raiders was up atter that Fuson hide-out; jes set up an' swore 'at I'd gin the word to 'em. You see, honey, he makes him up a spite that-a-way—jes out o' nothin'—'cause hit's sech a handy

thing to have around when he comes to want co'n. Thar's some one already purvided to steal from—some one 'at's done him a injury."

"Pappy! W'y, Johnny honey, sakes alive! What air ye ever a-gwine to do 'long o' that there thing?" For the old man had laboriously fetched out a rusty wolf-trap, and was now earnestly inspecting and overhauling it.

"Whut am I a-gwine to do 'long o' this hyer, Cornely? W'y, I am jes p'intedly a-gwine to set it in my grain-room. Buck Fuson air a bad man, honey. There's two men's blood to his count. They cain't nothin' be done to him for nair a one of 'em—you know, same's I do—'ca'se hit cain't be proved in a co't o' law. But I kin ketch him in this meanness with this hyer little jigger, and I'm a-gwine to do hit, jest ez sure ez my name's John Overholt!"

"Oh, Pappy! A leetle bit o' co'n fer a man's chillen—"

"Now, Cornely honey, that's a womern! Buck Fuson is the wrong kind o' man to have round. He's ben a-stealin' my co'n now fer two weeks and mo'. Ef I kin ketch him right out, and give him a fa'r shamin', he'll quit the Turkey Tracks fer good. So fer as Elmiry and the chaps

is consarned, they'll be better off without Buck 'n what they is with him."

At this moment Aunt Cornelia cried out joyously, "Oh, thar's my chile!" and ran to meet her daughter-in-law. The little girl—Cornelia the second—could navigate bravely by herself now, and Huldy was carrying the lusty twin boys. In the flutter of delight over this stolen visit, the ugly wolf-trap threat was forgotten. It had been a month and more since Sammy had set foot in his parents' house. It had gone all over both Turkey Tracks that Sam Overholt declared he would never darken Pap Overholt's door again—Pap Overholt, who had tried to make a pauper of him, loading him with gifts and benefits, like he was shif'less, no-'count white trash! The little Huldy reported him gone to Far Canaan, over beyond Big Turkey Track, in the matter of some employment, which he had not deigned to make clearer to his wife. He would not be back until the day after to-morrow; and meantime she might stay with the old folks two whole days and nights! In the severe school to which life had put her, the little Huldy had developed an astonishing amount of character, of shrewdness, and perception, and a very fair philosophy of her own. To

the elder woman's sad observation that it was mighty strange what made Sammy so "onthankful" and so "ha'sh" to his pappy, who had done so much for him, Huldy responded,

"No, Aunt Cornely, hit ain't strange, not a bit."

"Ain't strange? Huldy child, what do you mean?"

"W'y, don't you know, Aunt Cornely, ef he do Pappy that-a-way, when Pappy do so much fer him, then he don't have to be thankful. When everybody's a-tellin' him, 'Yo' pap's so kind, yo' pap does everything for you; look like you cain't be good enough to him,' he 'bleeged to find some way to shake off all that thankfulness 'at's sech a burden to him. And so when Pappy come a-totin' milk, an' a-totin' pork, an' a-ploughin' his co'n outen the weeds, w'y, Sammy jest draw down his face an' look black at Pappy, and make like he mad at him—like he don't want none o' them things—like Pappy jest pesterin' round him fer nothin' but meanness. Now mind, Aunt Cornely, I ain't say Sammy knows this his own se'f. But I studied Sammy mighty well, an' *I* know. Sammy gittin' tell he do me the same way. I wait on him hand and foot; I cook his bacon jest like

he tol' me you did it fer him. I fix everything the best I kin (and mebby all three of the chillen a-cryin' after me); and when he come in and see it all ready, and see how hard I got it, and seem like there's a call fer him to be thankful, then Sammy jest turns on hit all. He draw down his face at me and he say, black like: 'I don't want no bacon—what did you fix that shirt for that-a-way? Take away that turnip sallet—I cain't git nothin' like I want it.' Then, you know," with a little smile up into the other's face, half pitiful, half saucy,—"then, you know, Sammy don't have to be thankful. Hit was all done wrong."

It was the next evening — Saturday evening. The entire household (which included Elder Justice and two young preachers from Big Turkey Track, with Brother Tarbush, one of the new exhorters) had returned from the afternoon's meeting in the grove. Supper had been eaten and cleared away. The babies had been put to sleep; the two women and the five men—all strong and striking types of the Southern mountaineer—were gathered for the evening reading and prayer. Elder Justice, now nearly eighty years old, a beautiful and venerable person, had opened the big Bible,

and after turning the leaves a moment, raised his grave, rugged face and read: "'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death.'"

He paused, and on the intense stillness which followed the ceasing of his voice—the silence of evening in the deep mountains—there broke a long, shrill, agonized scream.

As every one of the little circle leaped to his feet, Aunt Cornelia's eyes sought her husband's face, and his hers. After that grinding, terrible cry, the stillness of the night was unstirred. Pap Overholt sprang to the hearth—where even in the midsummer months a log smoulders throughout the day, to be brightened into a cheery blaze mornings and evenings,—seized a brand, one or two of the others following his example, and ran through the doorway, across the little chip-yard, making for the low-browed log barn and the grain-room beside it.

None who witnessed that scene ever forgot it. Each one told it afterward in his own way, declaring that not while he lived could the remembrance of it pass from his mind. Pap Overholt's tall figure leaped crouching through the low

doorway, and next instant lifted the blazing brand high above his head; the others followed, doing the same. There by the grain-bin, with ashy countenance and shaking limbs, the sweat of anguish upon his forehead, his eyes roving dumbly around the circle of faces revealed by the flickering light of the brands—there with the dreadful wolf-trap (locked by its chain to a stanchion) hanging to his right arm, its fangs bitten through and through the flesh, stood Sammy.

Pap Overholt's mind refused at first to understand. He had known (with that sort of moral assurance which makes a thing as real to us as the evidence of the senses themselves) that it was Buck Fuson who had been stealing his grain. He had set his trap to catch Buck Fuson; not instantly could the mere sight of his eyes convince him that the trapped thief was the petted, adored, perverse son, who had refused his father's bounty when it had seemed the little wife and babies must starve. When he did realize, the cry that burst from his heart brought tears to all the eyes looking upon him. Down went the tall, broad figure, down into the dust of the grain-room floor. And there Pap Overholt grovelled on his knees, his white head almost at the thief's

feet, crying, crying that old cry of David's: "Oh, Sammy, my son! My son, Sammy! An' I wouldn't 'a' touched a hair o' his head. My God! have mercy on my soul, that would 'a' fed him my heart's blood—an' he wouldn't take bite nor sup from my hand. Oh, Sammy! what did you want to do this to yo' po' old pappy fer?"

Elder Justice, quick and efficient at eighty years, had sprung to the lad's right arm, two of the younger men close after. Aunt Cornelia held her piece of blazing light-wood for them while they cut away the sleeve and made ready to bear apart the powerful jaws of the trap. The little Huldy had said never a word. Her small, white face was strained; but it did not bear the marks of shock and of horror that were written on every other countenance there. When they had grasped jaws and lever, and Elder Justice's kind voice murmured, "Mind now, Sammy. Hold firm, son; we air a-gwine to pull 'em back. Brace yo'se'f," the boy's haggard eyes sought his mother's face.

"Le' me take it, Aunt Cornely," whispered Huldy, loosing the light-wood from the elder woman's hand and leaving her free. And the next moment Sammy's

left hand was clasped tight in his mother's; he turned his face round to her broad breast and hid it there; and there he sobbed and shook as the savage jaws came slowly back.

That strange hour worked a complete revolution in the lives of the little family in the cabin on The Bench and those in the big, hospitable Pap Overholt home. Sammy had "met up with" punishment at last; he had encountered discipline; and the change it wrought upon him was almost beyond belief. The spell which this winning, wayward, perverse creature had laid upon Pap Overholt's too affectionate, too indulgent nature was dissolved in that terrible hour. He was no more to the father now than a troublesome boy who had been most trying and not very satisfactory. The ability to wring the hearts of those who wished to benefit him had passed from Sammy; but it is only fair to say that the wish to do so seemed to be no longer his. While his arm was still in a sling, before he had yet raised his shamed eyes to meet the eyes of those about him, Pap Overholt cheerfully put old Ned and Jerry to the big ox-wagon and bodily removed the little household

from The Bench to the home which had been so long yearning for them.

Now, at last, he was Pap Overholt indeed. The little Huldy, whose burden of gratitude for two had seemed to Aunt Cornelia so grievous a one, was a daughter after any man's heart, and her brood of smiling children were a wagon-load which Pap John hauled with joy and pride to and from the settlement, to the circus—ay, every circus that ever showed its head within a day's drive of Little Turkey Track,—to meetin', to grove quarterlies, in response to every call of neighborliness, or of mere amusement.

# In the Piny Woods

BY MRS. B. F. MAYHEW

ASPARSELY settled bit of country in the piny woods of North Carolina. A house rather larger than its neighbors, though only a "story and a jump" of four rooms, two upper and two lower, and quite a commodius shed on the back containing two rooms and a small entry; and when Jeems Henry Tyler increased his rooms as his family grew, his neighbors "allowed" that "arter er while he'd make er hotel out'n it." Several out-houses stood at convenient distances from the house. A rough board paling enclosed the yard. A clearing of twenty-five or more acres lay around three sides of the house, and well-to-do Industry and Thrift plainly went hand in hand about the place.

A Saturday in early autumn was drawing near its close, and the family had finished supper, though it was not yet dark. Like all country folk of their sta-

tion in life, they ate in the kitchen, a building separate from the house. There were "Grandmother Tyler," a sweet-faced old woman, with silvery hair smoothed away under a red silk kerchief folded cornerwise and tied under her chin; and her son, "Father Tyler," with his fifty-odd years showing themselves in his grizzled hair and beard; and "Mother Tyler," a brisk stout woman, with great strength of character in her strong features, black eyes, and straight black hair. Her neighbors declared that she was the "main stake" in the "Tyler fence."

The children were "Mandy Calline," the eldest, and her mother's special pride, built on the same model with her mother; Joseph Zachariah, a long-legged youth; Ann Elisabeth, a lanky girl; Susan Jane, and Jeems Henry, or "Little Jim," to distinguish him from his father; and last, but by no means least in the household, came the baby. When she was born Mrs. Tyler declared that as all the rest were named for different members of both families, she should give this wee blossom a fancy name, and she had the desire of her heart, and the baby rejoiced in the name of Elthania Mydora, docked off into "Thaney" for short.

They had risen from the table, and

Father Tyler had hastened to his mother's side as the old lady moved slowly away, and taking her arm, guided her carefully to the house, for the eyes in the placid old face, looking apparently straight before her, were stone-blind.

"Come, now, gals," said Mother Tyler, briskly, with the baby in her arms, "make er hurry 'n' do up th' dishes. Come, Ann Elisabeth, go ter scrapin' up, 'n', Mandy Calline, pour up th' dishwater."

"Ya'as, yer'd better make er hurry," squeaked "Little Jim," from his perch in the window, "fer Mandy Calline's spectin' her beau ter-night."

"Ye'd best shet up yer clatter, Jim, lest ye know what yer talkin' erbout," retorted Mandy Calline, with a pout, making a dash at him with the dishcloth.

"Yer right, Jim," drawled Joseph Zachariah, lounging in the doorway. "I heerd Zeke White tell 'er he was ercomin' ter-night."

"Mar—" began Mandy Calline, looking at her mother appealingly.

"Shet up, you boys," came in answer. "Zachariah, ha' ye parted th' cows 'n' calves?"

"No, 'm."

"Then be erbout it straight erway. Jim—you Jeems Henry!"

"Ya'as, 'm," from outside the window.

"Go 'n' shet up the hen-'ouse, 'n' see ef th' black hen 'n' chickens ha' gone ter roost in there. She'll keep stayin' out o' nights till th' fox 'll grab 'er. Now, chillen, make 'er hurry 'n' git thoe in here. Come, Thaney gal, we'll go in th' house 'n' find pappy 'n' gra'mammy. Susan Jane, come fetch th' baby's ole quilt 'n' spread it down on th' floor fer 'er"; and Mother Tyler repaired to the house with the baby in her arms.

"Why, mother, ye in here by yerself? I tho't Jeems Henry was with yer."

"Ya'as, Malviny, he was tell er minit ergo, 'n' he stepped out to th' lot," replied the old lady, in tones so like the expression of her face, mildly calm, that it was a pleasure to hear her speak. "Ha' ye got thet baby wi' ye?"

"Ya'as, 'm."

"I wish ye'd put her on my lap. Gra'mammy 'ain't had 'er none ter-day."

"Ya'as, 'm, in er minit. Run, Susan Jane, 'n' fetch er cloth ter wipe 'er face 'n' han's; they're that stuck up wi' merlasses, ter say nothin' o' dirt. Thercy, thercy, now! Mammy's gal don't want

ter hev 'er face washed? Hu! tu! tu! Thaney mustn't cry so. Where's Jeff? Here, Jeff—here, Jeff! Ole bugger-man, come down the chimbly 'n' ketch this bad gal. You'd better hush. I tell yer he's er-comin'. Here, Susan Jane, take th' cloth. There, gra'mammy; there's jest es sweet er little gal es ye'd find in er dog's age." And the old lady at once cuddled the little one in her arms, swinging back and forth in her home-made rocker, and crooning an old-time baby song.

"Here, Susan Jane, han' me my knittin' from th' table, 'n' go 'n' tell Jim ter pitch in some pine knots 'n' make er light in here, 'n' be quick erbout it"; and Mother Tyler settled herself in another home-made rocker and began to knit rapidly.

This was the night-work of the female portion of the family, and numerous stockings of various colors and in various stages of progress were stuck about the walls of the room, which boasted neither ceiling nor lath and plaster, making convenient receptacles between the posts and weather-boarding for knitting-work, turkey-tail fans, bunches of herbs for drying, etc.

A pine-knot fire was soon kindled on

the hearth, and threw its flickering shadows on the room and its occupants as the dusk gathered in.

Mandy Calline and Elisabeth, running a race from the kitchen, burst into the back door, halting in a good-natured tussle in the entry.

"Stop that racket, you gals," called out the mother; and as they came in with suppressed bustle, panting with smothered laughter, she asked, briskly, "Have ye shet up everything 'n' locked th' kitchen door?"

"Ya'as, 'm," replied Mandy Calline; "'n' here's th' key on th' mantel-shelf." She then disappeared up the stairs which came down into the sitting-room behind the back door.

"Come, Ann Elisabeth, git yer knittin'. Git your'n too, Susan Jane."

"Yer'll ha' ter set th' heel fer me, mar," said Susan Jane, hoping privately that she would be too busy to do so.

"Fetch it here," from the mother, dashed the hope incontinently.

"I think we're goin' ter ha' some fallin' weather in er day er two; sky looks ruther hazy, 'n' I heerd er rain-crow terday, 'n' ther's er circle roun' th' moon," observed Father Tyler as he entered, and hanging his hat on a convenient nail in

a post, seated himself in the corner opposite his mother.

"Ha' ye got th' fodder all in?" queried his wife, with much interest.

"Ya'as; finished ter-day; that's all safe; but er rain 'ould interfere mightily wi' pickin' out cotton up in th' swamp, 'n' it's openin, mighty fast; shouldn't be s'prised ef some er that swamp don't fetch er bale ter th' acre, 'n' we'll have er right purty lot o' cotton, even atter th' rent's paid out"; and Father Tyler, with much complacency, lighted his pipe with a coal from the hearth.

"Th' gals 'll soon ha' this erround th' house all picked out; they got purty nigh over it ter-day, 'n' ther'll likely be one more scatterin' pickin'," said Mother Tyler.

Here a starched rustling on the stairs betokened the descent of Mandy Calline. Pushing back the door, she stepped down with all the dignity which she deemed suitable to don with her present attire.

A new calico dress of a blue ground, with a bright yellow vine rambling up its lengths, adorned her round, plump figure; her glossy black hair was plaited, and surmounted with a huge red bow, the ends of which fluttered out bravely as she stepped slowly into the room, busy-

ing herself pulling a basting out of her sleeve.

"Well, Mandy Calline," began her mother, "ef I do say it myself, yer frock fits jest as nice as can be. Looks like ye had been melted 'n' run into it. Nice langth, too," eying her critically from head to foot.

"Ya'as, 'm; 'n' it's comf'ble, too; ain't too tight ner nothin'," giving her shoulders a little twitch, and moving her arms a bit.

"I guess th' boys 'll ha' ter look sharp ef that gal sets 'er cap at any on 'em," put in Father Tyler, gazing proudly at his first-born, whereupon a toss of her head set the ribbon ends fluttering as she moved with great dignity across the room to the fireplace.

"Come, let me feel, dearie," said the old lady, softly, turning her sightless eyes toward the girl, hearing her movements in her direction.

"Ya'as, gra'mammy," and stepping nearer, she knelt at her grandmother's feet, and leaning forward, rested her hands lightly on her shoulders.

The old wrinkled hands groped their way to the girl's face, thence downward, over her arms, her waist, to the skirt of her dress.

"It feels nice, dearie, 'n' I know it looks nice."

"I'm glad ye like it, gra'mammy," said the girl, gently.

"Air ye spectin' comp'ny, dearie, that ye're all dressed up so nice? 'Pears like ye wouldn't put on yer new frock lest ye wer'."

Noting the girl's hesitation, the old lady said, softly, "Whisper 'n' tell gra'-mammy who's er-comin'"; and Mandy Calline, with an additional shade to the red in her cheeks, leaned forward and shyly whispered a name in her grandmother's ear.

A satisfactory smile broke like sunshine over the kind old face, and she murmured: "He's come o' good fambly, dearie. I knowed 'em all years ago. Smart, stiddy, hard-workin', kind, well-ter-do people. I've been thinkin' he's been er-comin' here purty stiddy, 'n' I knowed in my min' he warn't er-comin' ter see Zachariah."

Bestowing a kiss on one aged cheek and a gentle pat on the other, Mandy Calline arose to her feet, and lighting a splinter at the fire, opened the door in the partition separating the two rooms and entered the "parlor."

This room was the pride of the family,

as none of the neighbors could afford one set apart specially for company.

It was the only room in the house lathed and plastered. Mother Tyler, who was truly an ambitious woman, had, however, declared in the pride of her heart that this one at least should be properly finished.

Mandy Calline, with her blazing splinter, lighted the lamp, quite a gay affair, with a gaudily painted shade, and bits of red flannel with scalloped edges floating about in the bowl.

The floor was covered with a neatly woven rag carpet of divers gay colors. Before the hearth, which displayed a coat of red ochre, lay a home-made rug of startling pattern. The fireplace was filled with cedar boughs and sweet-smelling myrtle. Two "boughten" rocking-chairs of painted wood confronted each other primly from opposite ends of the rug. Half a dozen straight-back chairs, also "boughten," were disposed stiffly against the walls. A large folding-leaf dining-table of real mahogany, an heirloom in the family, occupied the space between two windows, and held a few scattered books.

The windows were covered with paper curtains of a pale blue tint. In the

centre of each a festive couple, a youth and damsel, of apparently Bohemian type, with clasped hands held high, disported themselves in a frantic dance. These pictures were considered by the entire neighborhood as resting triumphantly on the top round of the ladder of art.

Both parlor and sitting-room opened on a narrow piazza on the front of the house, Father Tyler not caring to waste space in a hall or passage.

Mandy Calline had flicked a bit of imaginary dust from the polished surface of the table, had set a bit straighter, if that were possible, one or two of the chairs, and turned up the lamp a trifle higher, when "Little Jim" opened the door leading out on the piazza, and in tones of suppressed excitement half whispered, "He's er-comin', Mandy Calline; Zeke's er-comin'; he's nigh 'bout ter th' gate."

"Go 'long, Jim, 'n' shet up; ye allers knows more'n the law allows," said his sister; but she glanced quickly and shyly out of the door.

Mr. Ezekiel White was just entering the gate. He was undoubtedly gotten up at vast expense for the occasion. A suit of store clothes of a startling plaid adorn-

ed his lanky figure, and a pair of new shoes cramped his feet in the most approved style. A new felt hat rested lightly on his well-oiled hair. But the crowning glory was a flaming red necktie which flowed in blazing magnificence over his shirt front.

Jeff, the yard dog, barked in neighborly fashion, as though yelping a greeting to a frequent visitor whom he recognized as a favored one.

"Susan Jane," said the father, "step ter th' door 'n' see who Jeff's er-barkin' at."

Eagerly the girl dropped her knitting and hastened to reconnoitre, curious herself.

"It's Zeke White," she replied, returning to her work.

"I knowed Mandy Calline was spectin' him," muttered Ann Elisabeth, under her breath.

Father Tyler arose and sauntered to the door, calling out: "You Jeff, ef ye don't stop that barkin'— Come here this minit, sir! Good-evenin', Zekle; come in."

"Good-evenin', Mr. Tyler. Is Zachariah ter home?"

"I dun'no'. Malviny, is Zachariah erroun' anywher's 'at ye know of?"

"I dun'no'; I hain't seed 'im sence supper."

"I know," piped up "Little Jim." "He said es he was er-goin' ter Bill Jackson's. But, Zeke," he added, in a hurried aside, catching hold of the visitor's coat in his eagerness, "Mandy Calline's ter home, 'n' she's fixed up ter kill!"

At this juncture Mandy Calline herself appeared in the doorway, striving to look calmly indifferent at everything in general and nothing in particular; but the expression in her bright black eyes was shifty, and the color in her cheeks vied with that of the bow on her hair; and by this time Zekle's entire anatomy exposed to view shared the tint of his brilliant necktie.

"Good-evenin', Zekle," said the girl, bravely assuming a calm superiority to all embarrassment and confusion. "Will ye come in th' parlor, er had ye ruther set out on th' piazza?"

Zekle was wise; he knew that "Little Jim" dare not intrude on the sacred precincts of the parlor, and he answered, "I'd jest es live set in th' parlor, ef it's all th' same ter you."

"Ya'as, I'd jest es live," she replied, and led the way into the room; he fol-

lowed, and sat down in rather constrained fashion on the chair nearest the door, deposited his hat on the floor beside him, took from his pocket and unfolded with a flirt an immense bandanna handkerchief, highly redolent of cheap cologne, and proceeded to mop his face with it.

"It's ruther warm," he observed.

"Ya'as," she replied, from a rocking-chair in the corner facing him. Here there was a long pause, and presently she added, "Pappy said es how he tho't it mought rain in er day er two."

The family in the sitting-room had settled down, the door being closed between that room and the parlor.

"There, mother, gi' Thaney ter me," said Mother Tyler. "I know ye're tired holdin' of her, fer she ain't no light weight," and she lifted the little one away.

"Heigho, Thaney, air ye erwake yit?" questioned the father.

"Erwake! Ya'as, 'n' likely ter be," said the mother. "Thaney's one o' th' setters-up, she is."

"Give 'er ter me, Malviny. Don't pappy's gal want er ride on pappy's foot? See 'ere, now! Whoopee!" and placing the plump little body astride his foot, the leg of which crossed the other, and clasp-

ing the baby hands in his, he tossed her up and down till she crowed and laughed in a perfect abandon of baby glee. A smiling audience looked on in joyous sympathy with the baby's pleasure, the old gra'mammy murmuring softly, "It's like feelin' the sunshine ter hear her laugh!"

"There, pappy," said Mother Tyler, anxiously, "that 'll do; ye're goin' ter git 'er so wide-erwake there'll be no doin' er thing with 'er. Come, now, Thaney, let mammy put ye down here on yer quilt. Come, come, I *know* ye've forgot that ole bugger-man that stays up th' chimbly 'n' ketches bad gals! There, now, *that's* mammy's nice gal. Git 'er playthings fer 'er, Susan Jane. Jim, don't ye go ter sleep there in that door. Ha' ye washed yer feet?"

"No, 'm," came drowsily from the doorway.

"Why upon th' yeth do ye wait every blessed night ter be told ter wash yer feet? Go straight 'n' wash 'em, 'n' then go ter bed. Come, gals, knit ter th' middle 'n' put up yer knittin'; it's time for all little folks ter go ter sleep 'n' look for ter-morrer. 'Pears like Thaney's goin' ter look fer it with eyes wide open."

"Malviny, ye'll have ter toe up my

knittin' fer me, Monday; I've got it down ter th' narrerin', 'n' I can't do no more," came softly from gra'mammy's corner.

"Ya'as, mother, I will; I could ha' toed it up this evenin' es well es not, tho' ef I had, ye'd ha' started ernuther, 'n' ye'd need ter rest; ye're allers knittin'."

"Ya'as, but, darter, it's all I kin do; 'n' I'm so thankful I kin feel ter knit, fer th' hardest work is ter set wi' folded han's doin' nothin'."

"Well, mother, it's but sildom that I ever knowed yer ter set with folded han's," remarked her son, with proud tenderness.

"Maybe, Jeems Henry; but I never tuck no consait ter myself fer workin', because I jest nachally loved it. Yer pappy use ter say I was er born worker, 'n' how he did use ter praise me fer bein' smart! 'n' that was sich er help! Somehow I've minded me of 'im all day ter-day — of th' time when he logged Whitcombe's mill down on Fallin' Crick. 'Twas—lemme see! Jeems Henry, ye're how ole?"

"Fifty-two my las' birthday."

"Well, that was fifty-one year ergo. You was all th' one I had then, 'n' yer pappy was erway from home all th' week, 'cept from Sat'day evenin' tell 'fore day

Monday mornin'. Melindy White staid wi' me; she was Zekle's great-aunt, 'n' er ole maid, 'n' people did say she was monst'ous cross 'n' crabbed, but she warn't never cross ter me. I mind me of er Sat'day, 'n' I'd be spectin' of yer pappy home. I'd git up at th' fust cock-crow, 'n' go wake Melindy, 'n' she'd grumble 'n' laff all in er breath, 'n' say: 'Ann Elisabeth Tyler, ye're th' most onreasonablest creeter that I ever seed! What in natur' do ye want ter git up 'fore day fer? Jest ter make th' time that much longer 'fore Jim Tyler comes? I know ef I was married ter th' President I wouldn't be es big er fool es ye air.' But, la! she'd git up jest ter pleasure me, 'n' then sich cleanin' up, 'n' sich cookin' o' pies 'n' cakes 'n' chickens, 'n' gittin' ready fer yer pappy ter come!" And the placid old face fairly glowed with the remembrance. "'N' I mind me," she crooned on, "of th' time when ye fust begun ter talk; I was er whole week er-teachin' yer ter say two words; I didn't do much else. Melindy allowed that I'd gone clean daft; 'n' when Sat'day come, 'long erbout milkin'-time, I put on er pink caliker frock. I 'member it jest es well! it had little white specks on the pink; he bought it at Miggs's

Crossroads, 'n' said I allers looked like er rose in it. I tuck ye in my arms 'n' went down ter th' bars, where I allers stood ter watch fer 'im; he come in er boat ter th' little landin' 'n' walked home, erbout er mile; 'n' when I seed 'im comin', 'n' he'd got nigh ernuff, I whispered ter ye, 'n' ye clapped yer little han's, 'n' fairly shouted out, 'Pappy's tumin'! pappy's tumin'!' Dearie me, dearie me; I kin see 'im now so plain! He broke inter er run, 'n' I stepped over th' bars ter meet 'im, 'n' he gethered us both in his arms, like es ef he'd never turn loose; then he car'ied ye up to th' house on one arm, the other one roun' my wais', 'n' he made ye say it over 'n' over—'Pappy's tumin', pappy's tumin';' 'n' Melindy 'lowed we wer' 'th' biggest pair o' geese'; but we was mighty happy geese jest th' same."

There was a pause. They were all listening. Then she went on. "Somehow ter-day I felt like I use ter of er Sat'day then, kinder spectin' 'n' light-hearted. I dun'no' why; I ain't never felt so befo' in all these years sence he died—forty-one on 'em; 'n' fifteen sence th' Lord shet down th' dark over my eyes, day 'n' night erlike. Well, well; I've had er heap ter be thankful fer; th' Lord

has been good ter me; fer no mother ever had er better son than ye've allers ben, Jeems Henry; 'n' ef Malviny had er ben my own darter, she couldn't er ben more like one; I've allers ben tuck keer on, 'n' waited on, 'n' 'ain't never ben sat erside fer no one. Ya'as, th' Lord's ben good ter me." She began to fumble for her handkerchief.

"But, mother, ye don't say nothin' o' what er blessin' ye've ben to us," said her son. "Ye've teached us many er lesson by yer patience in yer blindness."

"Ya'as, but, Jeems Henry, I had no call ter be nothin' else but patient; I had no call ter be onreasonable 'n' fret 'n' worry 'n' say that th' Lord had forsakened me when He hadn't. I knowed I'd only ter bide my time, 'n' I'm now near seventy-two year old. Dear, dear, how th' time goes! Seems like only th' other day when I was married! Was that nine the clock struck?"

"Ya'as, 'm."

"Well, I b'lieve I'll git ter bed."

"Wait, mother, let me help yer," said her daughter, hastily throwing aside her knitting.

"We'll both help ye, mother," said her son, putting one arm gently around her as she arose from her chair.

"Well, well," she laughed, with soft content. "I sh'll be well waited on with two children 'stid er one; but none too many—none too many."

Zekle White had made brave progress from the chair by the door to the other rocker, drawn closely beside that of Mandy Calline; and he was saying, in tones that suggested an effort: "I've seed other young ladies which may be better-lookin' in other folkses' eyes, 'n' they may be more suiterbler ter marry, but not fer me. Thar ain't but one gurl in this roun' worl' that I'd ask ter be my wife, 'n', Mandy Calline, I've ben keepin' comp'ny wi' you long ernuff fer ye ter know that ye air th' one." He swallowed, and went on: "I've got my house nigh erbout done. Ter be sho', 'tain't es fine es this un, nor es big; but I kin add ter it, 'n' jest es soon es it is done I want ter put my wife in it. Now, Mandy Calline, what yer say—will yer be my wife?"

Mandy Calline looked shy—much like a young colt when it is going to break out of harness. She rocked back and forth with short spasmodic jerks, and twisted her handkerchief into all conceivable shapes.

"Yer don't know how sot on it I am," he went on; "'n' all day long I'm er-

thinkin' how nice it 'll be when I'm er-workin', ploughin' maybe, up one row 'n' down ernuther, 'n' watchin' th' sun go down, 'n' lookin' forerd ter goin' ter th' house 'n' hev er nice little wife ter meet me, wi' everything tidied up 'n' cheerful 'n' comf'ble." Mandy Calline simply drooped her head lower, and twisted her handkerchief tighter. "Mandy Calline, don't yer say 'no,'" he said. "I love yer too well ter give yer up easy; 'n' I swear ef ye don't say 'yes,' I'll set fire 'n' burn up th' new house, fer no other 'oman sha'n't never live there. I'm er-waitin', Mandy Calline, 'n' don't, don't tell me no."

"Well, Zekle," she began, with much hesitation, "bein' es how I don't see no use in burnin' up er right new house, 'n' it not even finished, I guess es how—maybe—in erbout two or three years—"

"Two or three thunderations!" he cried out, ecstatically, seizing both her hands in his. "Yer mean two or three weeks! Mandy Calline, do ye mean ya'as, ye'll marry me? I want ter hear ye say it."

"Ya'as, Zekle," she said, shyly.

"Whoopee! I feel like I'd like ter jump up 'n' knock my heels tergether 'n' yell!"

"Yer'd better try it er spell," she said, smiling at him shyly, "'n' jest see how soon ye'd ha' th' hull fambly er-rushin' in ter see what was the matter."

Hereupon came the ominous sound of Father Tyler winding the clock in the sitting-room; Zekle knew 'twas a signal for him to depart.

"Well," slowly rising, "I guess I got ter go, but I do mortally hate ter. Come ter th' door wi' me, Mandy Calline"; and taking her hand, he drew her up beside him, but she stood off a bit skittishly, and he knew that it would be useless to ask the question which was trembling on his lips, so, quick as a flash, he dropped one arm around her waist, tipped up her chin with the other hand, and kissed her square on the mouth before she fairly knew what he was about.

"You Zekle White!" she cried out, snatching herself from his arm and bestowing a rousing slap on his face.

"I knowed ye wouldn't give me one, so I tuck it jest so. Good-night tell termorrer, Mandy Calline; I'm goin' home 'n' dream erbout ye."

The next morning dawned bright and soft. A perfect September morning. Father Tyler and the boys were at the lot feeding and milking. Mandy Calline

was cleaning up the house, her comely face aglow with her new-found happiness. Susan Jane attended to the baby, while Ann Elisabeth helped her mother "get breakfast."

"Gra'mammy was sleepin' so nice when I got up," said the girl, "that I crep' out 'n' didn't wake 'er. Had I better go see ef she's erwake now, mar? Breakfus is nigh erbout done."

"Not yet. Go tell Mandy Calline ter git th' milk-pitcher 'n' go to the cow-pen 'n' fetch some milk fer breakfus. No tellin' when they'll git thoo out there. Then you hurry back 'n' finish fryin' that pan o' pertaters. No need ter 'sturb gra'mammy till breakfus is ready ter put on th' table; 'n' yer pappy 'n' th' boys 'll ha' ter wash when they come from th' lot." And Mother Tyler opened the stove door and put in a generous pan of biscuits to bake.

Mandy Calline, with the milk-pitcher in her hand, hurried out to the cow-pen, which adjoined the stable lot. Her father was milking, Jim holding the calves. Zachariah was in the lot feeding the horse and pigs. She had just stepped over the bars into the pen, when who should appear, sauntering up, but Zeke White! He assumed a brave front, and

with hands thrust in his pantaloons pockets, came up, whistling softly.

"Good-mornin', Zekle," greeted Father Tyler, rising from his stooping position.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Tyler. Fine mornin'."

"Ya'as; but I'm erfeared we're goin' ter hev rain in er day er two. I feel ruther rheumaticky this mornin', er mighty shore sign that rain ain't fur off. Want milk fer breakfus, Mandy Calline? Well, fetch here yer pitcher."

A shy "good-mornin'" had passed between Mandy Calline and Zekle, and he sauntered up beside her, taking the pitcher, and as they stepped over the bars Father Tyler, hospitably inclined, said: "Take breakfus with us, Zekle? I lay Malviny 'll hev ernuff cooked ter give yer er bite."

With assumed hesitation Zekle accepted the invitation, and he and Mandy Calline passed on to the house, he carefully carrying the pitcher of milk.

He cleared his throat a time or two, and remarked again on the beauty of the morning, to which she rather nervously assented; then suddenly, the words seemingly shot out of him: "Mandy Calline, I'm goin' ter ask th' ole folks ter-day. What yer say?"

Mandy Calline was red as a turkey-cock, to which was now added a nervous confusion which bade fair to overwhelm her.

"It's too soon, Zekle. Whyn't yer wait er while?" she replied, tremblingly.

"No, 'tain't too soon," he answered, promptly. "I want it all done 'n' over with, then I sh'll feel mo' like ye b'long ter me. I'm goin' ter ask 'em ter-day; yer needn't say not. I know you're er-feared o' th' teasin'. But ye needn't min' that; ye won't hev ter put up wi' it long; fer th' way I mean ter work on that house ter git it done—well, 'twon't be long befo' it 'll be ready ter put my wife in it."

"Well, Zekle," said the girl, hesitatingly, "ef ye'd ruther ask 'em ter-day, why—I guess es how—ye mought es well do it. But let's go 'n' tell gra'mammy now; somehow I'd ruther she knowed it fust."

"We will," replied Zekle, promptly.

Mother Tyler was putting breakfast on the table. She suddenly paused and listened. Something was the matter. There were cries that betokened trouble. She hastened to the house, followed her husband and the boys on to gra'mammy's

room, and there on the bed, in peaceful contrast to all this wailing and sorrow, lay dear old gra'mammy, dead. The happiest smile glorified the kind old withered face, and the wrinkled hands lay crossed and still on her breast. She had truly met the husband of her youth, and God had opened in death the eyes so darkened in life.

# My Fifth in Mammy

BY WILLIAM LUDWELL SHEPPARD

I NEVER knew a time in which I did not know Mammy. She was simply a part of my consciousness; it seems to me now a more vivid one in my earliest years than that of the existence of my parents. We five, though instructed by an elder sister in the rudiments of learning, spent many more of our waking hours with Mammy; and whilst we drew knowledge from one source, we derived the greater part of our pleasure from the other—that is, outside of our playmates.

The moments just preceding bedtime, in which we were undergoing the process of disrobing at the hands of Mammy, were periods of dreadful pleasure to us. As I look back upon them, I wonder that we got any sleep at all after some of her recitals. They were not always sanguinary or ghostly, and of course when I scan them in the light of later years, it is apparent that Mammy, like the majority

of people, "without regard to color or previous condition of servitude," suffered her walk and conversation to be influenced by her state of health, mental and bodily. Her walk—I am afraid I must admit, as all biographers seem privileged to deal with the frailties of their victims as freely as with their virtues—her walk, viewed through the medium already alluded to, did not owe its occasional uncertainty to "very coarse veins," though that malady, with a slight phonetic difference, Mammy undoubtedly suffered from, in common with the facts. She was a great believer in "dram" as a remedial agent, and homœopathic practice was unknown with us at that period.

Mammy's code of laws for our moral government was one of threats of being "repoated to ole mahster," tempered by tea of her own making dulcified by brown sugar of fascinating sweetness, anecdote, and autobiography.

The anecdotal part consisted almost exclusively of the fascinating répertoire of Uncle Remus. Indeed, to know the charm of that chronicle is reserved to the man or woman whose childhood dates from the *ante bellum* period, and who had a Mammy.

In the autobiographical part Mammy

spread us a chilling feast of horrors, varied by the supernatural. Long years after this period I read a protest in some Southern paper against this practice in the nursery, with its manifest consequences on the minds of children. It set me to wondering how it was that the consequences in my day seemed inappreciable. I do not understand it now. Some of Mammy's stories would have been bonanzas to a police reporter of to-day; others would have bred emulation in Edgar Poe. And yet I do not recall any subsequent terrors.

An account of the execution of some pirates, which she had witnessed when a "gal," was popular. She had a rhyme which condensed the details. The condemned were Spaniards:

> Pepe hung, Qulo fell,
> Felix died and went to ——

Mammy always gave the rhyme with awful emphasis.

She had had an experience before coming into our family, by purchase, which gave her easy precedence over all the mammies of all our friends. To be sure, it was an experience which the other mammies, as "good membahs of de chutch," regarded as unholy; one which

they congratulated themselves would never lie on their consciences, and of which poor Mammy was to die unshriven in their minds; for she never became a "sister," so far as I ever learned.

But to us this experience was fruitful of many happy hours. Mammy had been tire-woman to Mrs. Gilfert, the reigning star of that date, at the old Marshall Theatre—the successor to one burnt in 1811.

The habit of the stock companies in those days was to remain the whole season, sometimes two or more, so Mammy had the opportunity to "assist" at the entire répertoire. It is one of the regrets of my life that I am not able to recall verbatim Mammy's arguments of the play, her descriptions of some of the actors, and her comments.

For some reason, when later on I wished to refresh my memory of these, Mammy had either forgotten them or suspected the intention of my asking. She ranked her experiences at the theatre along with her account of the adventures of the immortal "Mollie Cottontail" (for we did not know him as "Brer Rabbit"), and the rest of her lore, I suppose, and so could not realize that my maturer mind would care for any of them.

When I had subsequently made some acquaintance with plays, or read them, I recognized most of those described by Mammy. Some remain unidentified. Hamlet she preserved in name. Whilst she had no quotations of the words, she had a vivid recollection of the ghost scenes, and "pisenin' de king's ear." She also gave us scenes in which "one uv them kings was hollerin' for his horse"—plainly Richard. Julius Cæsar she easily kept in mind, as some acquaintance of her color bearing that name was long extant. I can still conjure up her tones and manner when she declaimed:

"'Dat you, Brutus?' An' he done stick him like de rest uv um; and him raised in de Cæsar fam'ly like he wuz a son!"

The ingratitude of the thing struck through our night-gowns even then.

The period when Mammy's sway weakened was indeterminate. We boys after a while swapped places with Mammy, and made her the recipient of our small pedantries. I do not recollect, however, that we were ever cruel enough to throw her ignorance up to her.

At last the grown-up sisters absorbed all of Mammy's spare time. Sympathy was kept up between them after her bond

with us was loosened, and they even took hints from her in matters of the toilet that were souvenirs of her stage days.

In the course of time reverses and bereavements came to the family. The girls had grown to womanhood and matrimony, and had begun their new lives in other places. Then came the inevitable to the elders, and it became necessary to convert all property into cash.

We were happy in being able to retain a good many of our household gods, and they are the Lares and Penates of our several homes to this day. We had long since ceased to think of Mammy Becky —she was never Rebecca—as property. In fact, we younger ones never thought of her as such. By law we were each entitled to a fifth in Mammy.

This came upon us in the nature of a shock at a family consultation on ways and means, and there was a disposition on the part of every party to the ownership to shift that responsibility to another.

I must do ourselves the justice to say that such a thing as converting Mammy into cash, and thus making her divisible, never for a moment entered our minds. It seemed, however, that the difficulty had occurred to her.

We all felt so guilty, when Mammy served tea that last evening, that we were sure she read our thoughts in our countenances. It would be nearer the truth to say that it was rather our fears that she should ever come to the knowledge that the word "sale" had been coupled with her name.

The next day we were to scatter, and it was imperative that some disposition should be made of Mammy. The old lady—for old we deemed her, though she could scarcely have been fifty — went calmly about the house looking to the packing of the thousand and one things, and not only looking, but using her tongue in language expressing utter contempt for all "lazy niggers" of these degenerate days—referring to the temporary "help." The eldest sister was deputed to approach and sound Mammy on the momentous question.

The deputy went on her mission in fear and trembling. The interview was easily contrived in the adjoining room.

We were exceedingly embarrassed when we discovered that Mammy's part of the dialogue was perfectly audible. As for the sister's, her voice could be barely heard. So that the effect to the unwilling eavesdropper was that which we are

familiar with in these days of hearing a conversation at the telephone.

"Don't you bother yo'self 'bout me, Miss Frances."

Interval.

"No, marm. I'd ruther stay right here in dis town whar ev'body knows me. Doan yawl study 'bout me."

Several bars' rest, apparently.

"Yes'm, I know hit's yo' duty to look after me, an' I belongs to all of you; but Ise concluded to let yawl off. You can't divide me into five parts, an' they ain' nah one uv you 'titled to any partickler part if you could; most uv me ain't much 'count nohow, what with very coarse veins an' so fothe. Oh, yes'm! I done study 'bout it plenty, an' I done concluded that I'll let yawl off an' do fur myself. You know I'm a prime cake-maker, bread-maker, an' kin do a whole pahcel uv other things besides; an' dress young ladies for parties, whar I learnt at the ole the-etter, which they built it after the fust one burnt up and all dem people whar dey got the Monnymental Chutch over um now; an' any kind of hair-dressin', curlin' wid irons or quince juice, an' so fothe. No, don't you bother 'bout me."

So Mammy was installed in a small house in a portion of the city occupied by

a good many free people, and, as we subsequently ascertained, not bearing a very savory reputation.

We had heard it rumored that there were some suitors for Mammy's hand. She had always avowed that she had been a "likely gal," but we had to take her word for this, as she had very slender claims to "likelihood"—if the word suits hers—in our remembrance. She was nearly a mulatto—very "light gingerbread," or "saddle-colored"—and a widow of some years' standing. Still, there was no accounting for tastes amongst the colored folks, any more than there was amongst the whites in this matter. We surmised that some of the aspirants suspected Mammy of having a *dot,* the accumulation of many perquisites for her assistance on wedding occasions. It may be remarked that she had no legal right to demand anything for such services.

One of the sisters approached Mammy timidly on this subject, and was assured positively by her that "they ain't no nigger in the whole university whar I would marry. No, ma'm. I done got 'nough of um."

We knew that Mammy's married life had been a stormy one. Her husband,

Jerry, had been a skilful coach-painter, and got good wages for his master, who was liberal in the 'lowance that was made by all generous owners to slaves of this class. Jerry was a fervent "professor," who came home drunk nearly every night, and never failed to throw up to Mammy her dangerous spiritual condition. Jerry was so vulnerable a subject that Mammy was prepared to score some strong points against him. He invariably met these retorts with roars of laughter and loud assertions of his being "in grace once for all."

Left the sole representative of my family in the city, I had to start a new establishment, just as Mammy did.

I made a visit to hers a few days after our separation, and came away with my heart in my mouth at the sight of some of the familiar objects of Mammy's room, and such of our own as she had fallen heir to, in strange places and appositions. I also felt that Mammy's room had a more homelike aspect than my own.

There was no doubt that Mammy enjoyed her new conditions and surroundings. She had been provided with a paper signed by some of us, stating that it was with our permission that she lived

to herself. This secured her free movement at all times—the privilege of very few of her race not legally manumitted.

Her visits to me were quite frequent, and she never failed to find something that needed putting to rights, and putting it so immediately, with fierce comments on the worthlessness of all "highlands," which was *negrocè* for hirelings —a class held in contempt by the servants owned in families.

I think that Mammy must have discovered the fact that my estate was somewhat deteriorated.

I was painfully conscious of this myself, and saw no prospect of its amelioration. The little cash that had come to me was quite dissipated, and my meagre salary was insufficient to satisfy my artificial wants—the only ones that a young man cannot dispense with and be happy.

In spite of the opinion prevailing in those days, that when a young man embraced the career of an artist it was a farewell to all hope of a sober and prosperous career, my father had been willing for me to follow my manifest bent, and I was to sacrifice a university career as the alternative. But the last enemy stepped between me and my hopes, and

there was nothing for it but to go to work.

I had an ardent admirer in Mammy, who, in her innocence of a proper standard, frequently compared my productions to a "music back" or a tobacco label. That was before the days of chromos.

Mammy turned up Sunday mornings to look after my buttons. Those were days of fond reminiscence and poignant regret on my part.

"Seems to me hit's time for you to be getting some new shirts, Mahs William," she said, one Sunday morning. Mammy touched me sorely there. A crisis was certainly impending in my lingerie.

"Oh, I reckon not. You must have got hold of a bad one, Mammy."

"I got hole uv all uv um what is out uv wash; and them gwine. The buttons is shackledy on all uv um, too. I wish I wuz a washer; then you wouldn't have to give yo' clothes out to these triflin' huzzies whar rams a iron over yo' things like they wuz made uv iron too."

"I suppose that you are getting along pretty well, Mammy," I remarked, irrelevantly.

"Oh, I kain' complain. I made two dollars an' five an' threppence out'n the Scott party last week; an' I hear tell uv

some new folks on Franklin Street gwine give a big party, an' I'm spectin' somethin' out uv dat. Lawdy, Lawdy, Mahs William," she added, after a pause given to reflection, "hit certainly does 'muse me to see how some 'r dese people done come up. But they kain' fool me. I knows what's quality in town an' what ain't. I can reckermember perfick when some uv these vay folks, when dey come to your pa's front do', never expected to be asked in, but jess wait thar 'bout their business ontwell yo' pa got ready to talk to um at the do'. Yes, sah. I bin see some uv dese vay people's daddies"—Mammy used this word advisedly—"kayin' their vittles in a tin bucket to their work; that what I bin see."

I was shaving during this monologue of Mammy's, with my back to her. A sudden exclamation of the name of the Lord made me start around and endanger my nose. I was not startled at the irreverence of the expression, however, as sacred names were familiar interjections of Mammy's, as of all her race.

"Ev'y button off'n these draw's," Mammy answered to my alarmed question—alarmed because I anticipated some disaster to my wardrobe. "Hit's a mortal shame. I'll take 'em home, an' Monday

I'll get some buttons on Broad Street an' sew um on."

This was embarrassing. I had twelve and a half cents in Spanish silver coin which I had reserved for the plate at church that day. I was going under circumstances that rendered a contribution unavoidable. I hated to expose my narrow means to Mammy, and said, carelessly, as I returned to my lather: "Oh, never mind. Another time will do, Mammy."

"Another time! You reckermember my old sayin', don't you, 'a stitch in time saves nine'? An' mo'n dat, bein' as this is the only clean pah you got, you 'bleest to have um next week fer de others to go to wash."

Confession was inevitable. "The fact is, Mammy, I don't happen to have any change to-day that I can hand you for the buttons." I was thankful that my occupation permitted me to keep my face from Mammy.

"Oh, ez fer that, Mahs William, yo' needn't bother. I got 'nough change 'round 'most all de time."

Mammy's tone was patronizing, and brought home to me such a realization of my changed and waning fortunes as no other circumstance could have done. Pos-

sibly I may have imagined it in my hypersensitiveness, but Mammy's voice in that sentence seemed transformed, and it was another mammy who spoke.

I apparently reserved my protest until some intricate passage in my shaving was passed. At least I thought that Mammy would think so. I was really trying to put my reply in shape.

I was anticipated.

"You know you is really 'titled to yo' fif's by law, Mahs William," resumed Mammy, in her natural manner, "because still bein' bond, you could call on me, an' I don't begrudge you; in fact, Ise beholden to you."

"Not at all, Mammy. Don't talk any more about my fifth. You are as good as free, you know."

"I knows that, Mahs William; but right is right, and I gwine to pay for them buttons."

"Well, you may do that this time, Mammy, but I shall certainly return you the money."

"Jess as you choose, Mahs William, but you's 'titled to yo' fif' all the same."

I must note here a characteristic of Mammy's which had strengthened as her powers failed, namely, "nearness." The euphemism applied at first, though Mam-

my yielded to temptations in the way of outfit as long as she deemed herself "likely." After that period a stronger expression was required. She was always in possession of money, and was frequently our banker for a day, when, in emergencies, our parents were not on hand.

Monday I found my garment with its full complement of buttons, but of such diversity of pattern that I planned a protest for Mammy's next visit.

But when she explained that the bill was only fo'pence — six and a quarter cents, Spanish — and that it was the fashion now, so she was told, "to have they buttons diffunt, so they could dentrify they clothes," I settled without remark. Mammy's financial skill and resource in imagination condoned everything.

It is painful to record that Mammy, encouraged by immunity from inquiry and investigation, no doubt, was tempted, as thousands of her betters have been and will be, and yielded under subsequent and similar circumstances.

My affairs took an unexpected turn now, and circumstances which have no place here made it possible for me to go to New York, with the intention of study-

ing for my long-cherished purpose of making art my calling.

I heard from Mammy from time to time—occasionally got a letter dictated by her. They opened with the same formula, beginning with the fiction that she "took her pen in her hand," and continuing, "these few lines leaves me tollerbul, and hoping to find you the same." My friend, the amanuensis, took great pleasure in reporting Mammy verbatim and phonetically. The times were always hard for Mammy in these letters, but she "was scufflin' 'long, thank Gawd, an' ain't don' forgot my duty to the 'state 'bout them fif's."

On my periodical visits home I always called upon her, and had a royal reception. I had casually said in a message to her in one of my letters that I never would forget her black tea and brown sugar. The old dame remembered this, and on my first visit home and to her, and on all succeeding visits, treated me to a brew of my favorite.

"Jess the same, Mahs William. Come from Mr. Blar's jess the same."

But we become sophisticated in time. I found that Mammy's tea lingered in my memory, it is true; and the prospect of a recurrence very nearly operated

against future visits. But virtue asserted herself, and I always went.

War now supervened. To it the brushes and the palette yielded. I returned home, and to arms. While all this made a complete revolution in my affairs, those of Mammy seemed to hold the even tenor of their way.

I saw Mammy every time I had a furlough, and she repaired for me damages of long standing. In sentiment she was immovably on my side. She objected decidedly to any more of "them no-'count men bein' sot free," and was very doubtful whether any more of her own sex should be so favored, except "settled women."

I do not know whether Mammy had a lurking suspicion that general manumission meant competition or not. So far as I could make out, she fared as she had long elected to do. Bacon and greens and her perennial tea were good enough for her. And here may be noted the average negro's indifference to cates. In my experience I never knew them to give up "strong food" for delicate fare except on prescription.

The next phase of my intercourse with Mammy was after the evacuation of the city and the event of Appomattox. The

first incident was, with the negroes' usual talent that way, so transmogrified in pronunciation that it could mean nothing to them. It stood to them for a tremendous change, one which could not be condensed into a word, even though it exceeded their powers to pronounce it.

I had come back, as had thousands of others, with nothing in my hands, and only a few days' rations accorded by the enemy in my haversack; had come back to a mass of smoking débris and a wide area of ruin which opened unrecognized vistas that puzzled, dazed, and pained the home-seeker.

By instinct, I suppose, I drifted towards my *ante bellum* quarters. My former landlord gave me a speechless welcome. To my inquiry as to the possibility of my reinhabiting my old quarters, he simply nodded and handed me the key. The tears that I had seen standing on his lids rolled down as he did so.

The room was cumbered with the chattels of the last tenant. There was no bed amongst them, but a roll of tattered carpet served me perfectly. I fell asleep over a slab of hardtack. That evening, on waking, I bethought me of Mammy.

My kind host allowed me to make a

toilet in his back room behind the store. It consisted of a superficial ablution and the loan of a handkerchief. Mammy was not in. A neighbor of her sex and color offered me a chair in her house, but I sat in Mammy's tiny porch.

This part of the city was unchanged, but I missed a familiar steeple which had always been visible from Mammy's door.

It was late afternoon when Mammy came. She did not recognize me, but paused at the gate.

"Ef you's a sick soldier you must go to the hospital; you kain' stay here," I heard her say before I roused myself sufficiently to speak.

"Mammy."

An ejaculation of the name of the Lord that brought the neighbor to her door went up, and Mammy caught my hands and wept.

"Come in, my Gawd! Mahs William! you ain' hurted, is you?"

She pushed a chair to me and took one herself. For a few moments she confined herself to ejaculations of "Well! well! well!" and the name of the Deity. Then, "The town is bu'nt up; the army done 'rendered, an' Mahs William come back ragged ez a buzzard!"

I did not interrupt her. I could think of nothing to say, and began to be afraid that something was the matter with my brains. Meanwhile Mammy was bustling about, and before I knew it she had started the little fire into a blaze and the tea was boiling.

The flickering light glinted over the walls. At first I did not heed what it revealed; then I saw it glow and fade over some early efforts of my own, frameless crudities, to which Mammy had fallen heir. They had become old masters! What centuries ranged themselves between the birth of those pictures and now!

This time tea was nectar, and after I had eaten a little cold middling bacon and hoe-cake, that she had put before me on a fractured member of our old Canton set, I took a more cheerful view of life. I believe that I would have shed tears over these poor relics from happier days, except that I was not quite conscious that anything was real that day. I told Mammy where I was. She seemed to think it perfectly in the nature of things that I should be there. Indeed, she appeared singularly calm in this cataclysm.

I encountered friends on my return to

my quarters, and had invitations innumerable to meals and shelter. My costume was no drawback. Nobody knew how anybody was dressed.

The city was in a fever of excitement over the probable fate of those who had not yet returned, and in making provision for the homeless. Mammy turned up next morning with some of my civilian clothes that had been confided to her.

Mammy's simple "What you gwine do now, Mahs William?" thrown in whilst she assisted by her presence at my complete change of toilet—lapse of time was nothing to her—woke me to the momentous problem. There was no commissary sergeant to distribute even the meagre rations that so long left us ravenous after every meal. I could not camp in the Capitol Square, even if I had wished so to do.

Mammy left me with the injunction to call on her "ef I didn't have nowhar else to go."

I went with unbroken fast to see what was left of the city. I met many acquaintances on the same errand. None of us seemed to realize that day what was to be done. For four years our campaigns had been planned for us.

I learned from one acquaintance, how-

ever, that I could have rations for the asking, and not long after found myself in line at the United States Commissary Department, along with hundreds of others, and departed thence bearing a goodly portion of hardtack and codfish. These I took to Mammy, who cooked the fish for me under loud protests against the smell.

Not long thereafter a number of us paroled soldiers made a mess, and cooked for ourselves at the room of one of them.

On one of these indeterminate days—dates had become nothing to me—I saw a dapper young man sketching about the ruins. I spoke to him, and mentioned that his had been my profession. This acquaintance was the beginning of hope.

I showed the young man places of interest, gave him points about a good many things, and at last fell to making sketches to help him out. They were perfectly satisfactory and liberally paid for. With this capital I set myself up in another place, which had a north light—by-the-way, I had been dispossessed of the asylum where I first found shelter, as the previous tenant returned. I was able to purchase material and apparel. But what was I to paint, and where to sell the product? My hand was out, I

discovered, so I set to studying still life, and painting those of my friends who had the patience to sit.

I would have gone back to my old haunts in New York but for the material reason that my funds were too low, and the sentimental one that I not only was not in the humor for appealing to citizens of that section for patronage, but was not sure that it would not be withheld, from an analogous state of mind towards me.

Summer ran into fall. Mammy's visits increased in frequency, and her conversation drifted towards the difficulties of living.

I had long ago discharged all of her claims for material and repairs, but I noticed a tendency on her part to prepare my mind for a regular subsidy. I ignored these hints because it was impossible for me to carry out Mammy's plan, and painful for me to say so.

She approached the matter in a different way finally, and said, one day:

"Mahs William, you been cayin' on yo' fif' for some time now. Doan you think it's time for some of the yothers to look after them?"

I suggested that the whole family was about on a parity financially; that one

brother was drifting in the trans-Mississippi, another living more precariously than I was. Suddenly a thought struck me, and I proposed that Mammy should apply to my married sister in the country, who could at least give her a home.

Mammy was very nearly indignant in her rejection of the proposition.

"Me live in de country! Why, Mahs William, I'm town-bred to de backbone. What I gwine do thar? Whar's anybody whar'll want my sponge-cake, jelly, and blue-monge, whar I can git ez much ez I wants to do in town? Who gwine want my clar-starchin' an' pickle-makin' an' ketchups? Dem tacky people doan want none of my makin's."

I ventured to remind Mammy that all dwellers in the country were not tackies.

"I know dat, sah; but whole parcel of um is. Besides, heap uv de quality folks is poor an' in trouble sence the revacker-ation. I'd rather give up my other fif's fust."

Of course Mammy's propositions were contradictory, but I had long known that she was not gifed with a logical mind, so I made no attempt to convict her of inconsistency.

From time to time I got small jobs of drawings for architects, as people had be-

gun to bestir themselves and rebuild. I had been assured that I would find no prejudice against me in New York, but would stand on my own merits. I was not profoundly convinced that this was a safe risk for me to take. But living here was becoming impossible. Our own people were out of the question as purchasers of pictures. My still-lifes, from long exposure in the window of a friendly merchant in Broad Street, were becoming the camping-ground of the flies, and deteriorating rapidly. I was not strong in landscape, and the only subjects which suggested themselves were military, taken from my point of view politically, and not likely to be convertible into cash by persons of other convictions.

I was leaning against my ceiling one gray afternoon — at least I suppose it should be called ceiling, for it ran from the highest part of the chamber on an angle to the floor, and was pierced by a dormer—and contemplating a bunch of withered flowers which I had studied almost into dissolution, when Mammy knocked.

I had laid my palette on the floor, and was standing with my hands in my pockets. They fumbled, on one side with

my bunch of keys, on the other with a small roll of small bills, the dreadful fractional currency of that era, whilst, in imagination, I projected my motive on the bare canvas, a twenty by twenty-four. I was sorry that Mammy had come, because a subject was beginning to take form in my mind. It was suggested by the withered flowers.

I thought that it would be a good idea to group them with a bundle of letters, some showing age, the top one with a recent postmark, and call the composition "Dead Hopes." My thoughts were divided between the selection of a postmark for the top letter and the possibility of getting a frame, whilst Mammy was going through the process of finding a chair and seating herself. The invitation to come in implied the other courtesies.

The old lady was marvellously attired, and I wondered what could be the occasion of it. She had on a plaid shawl of purple, green, and red checkers, crossed on her bosom. Around her throat there was a lace collar of some common sort, held by a breastpin of enormous value if calculated by the square inch. She wore her usual turban of red and white, but on the top of it to-day was a straw

bonnet of about the fashion of 1835, with flowers inside, and from it depended a green veil. Her frock was silk of an indescribable tint, the result of years of fading, and was flounced. The old lady had freed herself of her black cotton gloves, and was rolling them into a ball. I sighed inwardly, for this was the outward sign of undeterminable sitting.

Suddenly the self-arranged color scheme struck me as the cool light fell over Mammy. I seated myself and seized my palette.

"Sit still, Mammy, right where you are. I'm going to paint you."

"Namer Gawd! paint me, Mahs William? After all dem pretty things whar you kin paint, paint yo' old Mammy?" She slapped herself on the knees, called the name of the Lord several times, and burst into the heartiest laugh that I had heard from her for some time.

"Yes, Mammy, just sit right still, and don't talk much, and I won't make you tired."

I worked frantically, getting in the drawing as surely as I could, then attacked the face in color. The result was a success that astonished me. Mammy's evident fatigue stopped me. It was fortunate. I might have painted more and

spoiled my study. I thought that she would go now, but her mission was not fulfilled. She had come to consult me on an important matter.

"You know this Freedman's Bureau, Mahs William? Well, they tells me—Lawd knows what they calls it bureau for!—they tells me that ef a colored pusson goes down thar and gives in what he wuz worth—women either, mind you—that the guv'mint would pay um."

Mammy paused for corroboration, but I determined to hear what she might add to this remarkable statement. "Well?"

"Well, sah, I didn't want to go down thar without no price, so I called in to arst you what you might consider yo' fif' worth, an' five times ovah."

I did not laugh at Mammy. The emancipated negroes had such utterly wild notions of what was going to be done for them that Mammy's statement did not surprise me very much. I let her go with the assurance that I would inquire into the matter. She left enjoining me not to put that "fif' too cheap," and I insisting that she should not go to the Bureau, in deference to whose officials her astonishing toilet had evidently been made.

I was so much pleased with my own

work that it was nearly twilight before the knock of a familiar friend roused me. He was a clever amateur, and took the greatest interest in my work. His enthusiasm over Mammy's effigy made me glow. He agreed to pose for me in Mammy's costume.

Next day I borrowed the outfit without intimating that it was to be worn by anybody. Mammy was over-nervous about its being properly cared for. I think that she still contemplated appearing in it at the Bureau.

In a week the picture was complete. My model and I went out and celebrated appropriately but frugally.

A small label in the corner gave the title to the picture—"My old Mammy."

My friend gave my work a place in his window, and my acquaintances generally accorded unqualified praise. The older ones recognized Mammy at once.

Pending a purchaser for this, I started my deferred subject, and changed it into a figure piece. A lovely friend was my model. She contemplated the flowers and letters. Above the old piece of furniture on which she leaned there hung a photograph, a sword, and a sash—a more striking suggestion of my first title, "Dead Hopes." How little I dreamed,

as I worked, that there was such happy irony in the name, and that Mammy could ever, in the remotest way, conduce to such a result!

Nearly every morning I hovered about my friend's establishment at a sufficient distance to elude suspicion of my anxiety, but easily in visual range of my exhibit.

One morning it was not visible. I rushed to the store with a throbbing breast. Alas! the picture had only been shifted to another light. Before the revulsion of feeling had time to overpower me I was seized by my friend the merchant.

"It's a regular play," he exclaimed.

He forced me to a seat on a pile of cheese-boxes, and facing me, began:

"Yesterday, the old lady," pointing to the picture, "came in. She took no notice of her portrait, but said that she had failed to find you; that she was anxious to hear what you had done about the Bureau business." (I had forgotten it utterly.) "Well, I could tell her nothing, and she started to go out just as a group opened the door to come in. Mammy made one of her courtly bows, and gave place. The young lady who was one of the three coming in, the others evi-

dently her parents, said, in a loud whisper, 'Why, it's she!' Mammy, who either did not hear or did not understand, was about to pass out, when the young lady accosted her with, 'I beg your pardon, but isn't that your portrait?'

"'I grant you grace, young mistiss, but sence I looks, hit is. Hit wuz did by my young mahster, which he can do all kinds of pictures lovely.'

"'Your young master?' the young lady said—sweet voice, too; dev'lish handsome girl—'your young master?' Then she said aside to the others, 'Isn't it charmingly interesting?'

"'Yes, 'm, I call him so. But really I'm only his'n a fif'.'

"'His fif?' the young lady said, looking puzzled. I stepped up to them to explain, just for politeness, though I was sure that they weren't customers. 'She means that he owned a fifth interest in her previous to—the recent change in affairs.'

"'That's hit,' said Mammy, nodding to them. 'But I don't expect to hear from the other fif's. It don't make much diffunce, howsomever, bein' ez how the Bureau is gwine settle up.'

"The visitors evidently did not under-

stand this. I explained what Mammy was after—you had told me, you know. They were very much amused, and asked a heap of questions. After a little talk between themselves, in which I could not help seeing that the young lady was very earnest, the gentleman asked:

"'Is the work for sale?' Was it for sale!"

My friend nearly prostrated me with a hearty punch by way of expressing his feelings, whilst I was choking for an answer.

"Well, sir, I gave him the figger. He bought so quick that it made me sick I hadn't asked more. Looker here!"

He displayed two new greenbacks which covered the amount. We embraced.

At last Mammy had become a source of revenue. I must, in justice to myself, record the fact that a resolve immediately took form in my mind that she also should be a beneficiary of my good fortune.

My friend wanted me to take the picture down myself. I told him that it was not ethical to do so. The precious burden was confided to his porter. When we returned to his store we found the gentleman there who had made the

purchase. I was duly presented by my friend.

The gentleman said that he had not noticed my name on the picture particularly, nor on the receipt given by the merchant for the money, which gave the title and painter of the work, until he had gotten back to the hotel, when his wife recognized it and remembered having been in my studio—a fine name for a small concern—in New York, and that we had many friends in common there.

The upshot of the matter was that the gentleman gave me an invitation to call at the Spottswood. I went the next day.

They were immensely amused and interested with any particulars about her. The father—the names are immaterial, the young lady's was Elaine—asked me jocularly at what sum I estimated my fifth in Mammy. I had previously convinced him that we never had the remotest idea of parting with the old lady. Consequently we had never estimated her value, but that I thought my fifth at the time of the settling of the estate would have been about one hundred dollars. After I had made several visits, the three came to see my other picture.

The day after their departure Mammy called. She was in fine spirits over a

visit that she had made to my new friends, at their earnest request. All the time that she was speaking she was working at a knot in the corner of her handkerchief. I knew that she kept her small valuables there, but was thunderstruck when she extracted two fifty-dollar bills.

"Why, Mammy! Where—"

"Dat's all right, honey. The Bureau gent'man fix it all, jess like I tole you. He said dat he done 'nquired, an' yo' fif' was wuth dat—two fifties, one hundred—an' I let him off de res'."

"But what gentleman?"

"Dat gent'man whar was at de Spottswood Hotel. He tole me he wuz agent for de Bureau. An' I tell you, Mahs William, dey's quality, dem folks. You kain' fool Becky."

Of course I did not enlighten Mammy. What would have been the use?

Not many days thereafter I got a request to ship my "Dead Hopes," at my price, to the address of a frame-maker in New York. Elaine's father said that he had a purchaser for it. I discovered later that he was a master of pleasant fiction.

When I wondered, long after, to him that he should have bought a Confederate picture, he convinced me that my picture

had nothing Confederate in it; that he had inferred that I had painted it in a catholic spirit. The lady was in mourning, the flowers faded, the letters too small for postmark, the picture on the wall a colorless photograph, and the sword a regulation pattern common to both armies. He thought it very skilfully planned, and complimented me on it. I was silent. All the Confederate part and point had been in my mind.

About a year after this—I had been located in New York some months—Elaine and I came on a visit to Richmond. I might just as well say that it was our bridal trip.

We looked up Mammy in her comfortable quarters. She had been well provided for. There was some little confusion in her mind at first as to who Elaine was, but on being made to understand, called down fervent blessings upon her head.

"Now the old lady kin go happy. I always said that I had nussed Mahs William, an' ef I jess could live long 'nuff to—"

Elaine cut in rather abruptly, I thought.

"Why, Mammy, what a beautiful vine you have on your stoop!"

"What's stoop, honey? Dat's a poach."

Mammy lived some years longer, aging comfortably, and unvexed by any question of fractions. She died a serene integer, with such comfortable assurance of just valuation as is denied most of us, and contented that it should be expressed in terms that were, to her, the only sure criterion applicable to her race.

# An Incident

BY SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT

IT was an ordinary frame house standing on brick legs, and situated on a barren knoll, which, because of the dead level of marsh and swamp and deserted fields from which it rose, seemed to achieve the loneliness of a real height. The south and west sides of the house looked out on marsh and swamp; the north and east sides on a wide stretch of old fields grown up in broom-grass. Beyond the marsh rolled a river, now quite beyond its banks with a freshet; beyond the swamp, which was a cypress swamp, rose a railway embankment leading to a bridge that crossed the river. On the other two sides the old fields ended in a solid black wall of pine-barren. A roadway led from the house through the broom-grass to the barren, and at the beginning of this road stood an outhouse, also on brick legs, which, save for a small stable, was the sole out-building.

One end of this house was a kitchen, the other was divided into two rooms for servants. There were some shattered remnants of oak-trees out in the field, and some chimneys overgrown with vines, showing where in happier times the real homestead had stood.

It was toward the end of February; a clear afternoon drawing toward sunset; and all the flat, sad country was covered with a drifting red glow that turned the field of broom-grass into a sea of gold; that lighted up the black wall of pine-barren, and shot, here and there, long shafts of light into the sombre depths of the cypress swamp. There was no sign of life about the dwelling-house, though the doors and windows stood open; but every now and then a negro woman came out of the kitchen and looked about, while within a dog whined.

Shading her eyes with her hand, this woman would gaze across the field toward the ruin; then down the road; then, descending the steps, she would walk a little way toward the swamp and look along the dam that, ending the yard on this side, led out between the marsh and the swamp to the river. The over-full river had backed up into the yard, however, and the line of the dam could now

only be guessed at by the wall of solemn cypress-trees that edged the swamp. Still, the woman looked in this direction many times and also toward the railway embankment, from which a path led toward the house, crossing the heap of the swamp by a bridge made of two felled trees.

But look as she would, she evidently did not find what she sought, and muttering "Lawd! Lawd!" she returned to the kitchen, shook the tied dog into silence, and seating herself near the fire, gazed sombrely into its depths. A covered pot hung from the crane over the blaze, making a thick bubbling noise, as if what it contained had boiled itself almost dry, and a coffee-pot on the hearth gave forth a pleasant smell. The woman from time to time turned the spit of a tin kitchen wherein a fowl was roasting, and moved about the coals on the top of a Dutch oven at one side. She had made preparation for a comfortable supper, and evidently for others than herself.

She went again to the open door and looked about, the dog springing up and following to the end of his cord. The sun was nearer the horizon now, and the red glow was brighter. She looked toward the ruin; looked along the road; came down the steps and looked toward

the swamp and the railway path. This time she took a few steps in the direction of the house; looked up at its open windows, at the front door standing ajar, at a pair of gloves and a branch from the vine at the ruin, that lay on the top step of the piazza, as if in passing one had put them there, intending to return in a moment. While she looked the distant whistle of a locomotive was heard echoing back and forth about the empty land, and the rumble of an approaching train. She turned a little to listen, then went hurriedly back to the kitchen.

The rumbling sound increased, although the speed was lessened as the river was neared. Very slowly the train was moving, and the woman, peeping from the window, watched a gentleman get off and begin the descent of the path.

"Mass Johnnie!" she said. "Lawd! Lawd!" and again seated herself by the fire until the rapid, firm footstep having passed, she went to the door, and standing well in the shadow, watched.

Up the steps the gentleman ran, pausing to pick up the gloves and the bit of vine. The negro groaned. Then in the open door, "Nellie!" he called, "Nellie!"

The woman heard the call, and going

back quickly to her seat by the fire, threw her apron over her head.

"Abram!" was the next call; then, "Aggie!"

She sat quite still, and the master, running up the kitchen steps and coming in at the door, found her so.

"Aggie!"

"Yes, suh."

"Why didn't you answer me?"

The veiled figure rocked a little from side to side.

"What the mischief is the matter?" walking up to the woman and pulling the apron from over her face. "Where is your Miss Nellie?"

"I dun'no', suh; but yo' supper is ready, Mass Johnnie."

"Has your mistress driven anywhere?"

"De horse is in de stable, suh." The woman now rose as if to meet a climax, but her eyes were still on the fire.

"Did she go out walking?"

"Dis mawnin', suh."

"This morning!" he repeated, slowly, wonderingly, "and has not come back yet?"

The woman began to tremble, and her eyes, shining and terrified, glanced furtively at her master.

"Where is Abram?"

"I dun'no', suh!" It was a gasping whisper.

The master gripped her shoulder, and with a maddened roar he cried her name —"Aggie!"

The woman sank down. Perhaps his grasp forced her down. "'Fo' Gawd!" she cried—"'fo' Gawd, Mass Johnnie, I dun'no'!" holding up beseeching hands between herself and the awful glare of his eyes. "I'll tell you, suh, Mass Johnnie, I'll tell you!" crouching away from him. "Miss Nellie gimme out dinner en supper, den she put on she hat en gone to de ole chimbly en git some de brier what grow dey. Den she come back en tell Abram fuh git a bresh broom en sweep de ya'd. Lemme go, Mass Johnnie, please, suh, en I tell you better, suh. En Abram teck de hatchet en gone to'des de railroad fuh cut de bresh. 'Fo' Gawd, Mass Johnnie, it's de trute, suh! Den I tell Miss Nellie say de chicken is all git out de coop, en she say I muss ketch one fuh unner supper, suh; en I teck de dawg en gone in de fiel' fuh look fuh de chicken. En I see Miss Nellie put 'e glub en de brier on de step, en walk to'des de swamp, like 'e was goin' on de dam—'kase de water ent rise ober de dam den—en den I gone in de broom-

grass en I run de chicken, en I ent ketch one tay I git clean ober to de woods. En when I come back de glub is layin' on de step, en de brier, des like Miss Nellie leff um—" She stopped, and her master straightened himself.

"Well," he said, and his voice was strained and weak.

The servant once more flung her apron over her head, and broke into violent crying. "Dat's all, Mass Johnnie! dat's all! I dun'no' wey Abram is gone; I dun'no' what Abram is do! Nobody ent been on de place dis day—dis day but me—but me! Oh, Lawd! oh, Lawd en Gawd!"

The master stood as if dazed. His face was drawn and gray, and his breath came in awful gasps. A moment he stood so, then he strode out of the house. With a howl the dog sprang forward, snapping the cord, and rushed after his master.

The woman's cries ceased, and without moving from her crouching position she listened with straining ears to the sounds that reached her from the stable. In a moment the clatter of horses' hoofs going at a furious pace swept by, then a dead silence fell. The intense quiet seemed to rouse her, and going to the door, she looked out. The glow had faded, and the

gray mist was gathering in distinct strata above the marsh and the river. She went out and looked about her as she had done so many times during that long day. She gazed at the water that was still rising; she peered cautiously behind the stable and under the houses; she approached the wood-pile as if under protest, gathered some logs into her arms and an axe that was lying there; then turning toward the kitchen, she hastened her steps, looking back over her shoulder now and again, as if fearing pursuit. Once in the kitchen she threw down the wood and barred the door; she shut the boarded window-shutter, fastening it with an iron hook; then leaning the axe against the chimney, she sat down by the fire, muttering, "If dat nigger come sneakin' back yer now, I'll split 'e haid open, *sho*."

Recovering a little from her panic, she was once more a cook, and swung the crane from over the fire, brushed the coals from the top of the Dutch oven, and pushed the tin kitchen farther from the blaze. "Mass Johnnie 'll want sump'h'n to eat some time dis night," she said; then, after a pause, "en I gwine eat *now*." She got a plate and cup, and helped herself to hominy out of the pot,

and to a roll out of the oven; but though she looked at the fowl she did not touch it, helping herself instead to a goodly cup of coffee. So she ate and drank with the axe close beside her, now and then pausing to groan and mutter—"Po' Mass Johnnie!—po' Mass Johnnie!—Lawd! Lawd!—if Miss Nellie had er sen' Abram atter dat chicken—like I tell um—Lawd!" shaking her head the while.

Through the gathering dusk John Morris galloped at the top speed of his horse. Reaching the little railway station, he sprang off, throwing the reins over a post, and strode in.

"Write this telegram for me, Green," he said; "my hand trembles.

"*To Sam Partin, Sheriff, Pineville:*

"My wife missing since morning. Negro, Abram Washington, disappeared. Bring men and dogs. Get off night train this side of bridge. Will be fire on the path to mark the place.

"JOHN MORRIS."

"Great God!" the operator said, in a low voice. "I'll come too, Mr. Morris."

"Thank you," John Morris answered. "I'm going to get the Wilson boys, and Rountree and Mitchell," and for the first

time the men's eyes met. Determined, deadly, sombre, was the look exchanged; then Morris went away.

None of the men whom Morris summoned said much, nor did they take long to arm themselves, saddle, and mount, and by nine o'clock Aggie heard them come galloping across the field; then her master's voice calling her. There was little time in which to make the signal-fire on the railroad embankment, and to cut light-wood into torches, even though there were many hands to do the work. John Morris's dog followed him a part of the way to the wood-pile, then turned aside to where the water had crept up from the swamp into the yard. Aggie saw the dog, and spoke to Mr. Morris.

"Dat's de way dat dawg do dis mawnin', Mass Johnnie, an' when I gone to ketch de chicken, Miss Nellie was walkin' to'des dat berry place."

An irresistible shudder went over John Morris, and one of the gentlemen standing near asked if he had a boat.

"The bateau was tied to that stake this morning," Mr. Morris answered, pointing to a stake some distance out in the water; "but I have another boat in the top of the stable." Every man turned to go for it, showing the direction of their

fears, and launched it where the log bridge crossed the head of the swamp, and where now the water was quite deep.

The whistle was heard at the station, and the rumble of the on-coming train. The fire flared high, lighting up the group of men standing about it, booted and belted with ammunition-belts, quiet, and white, and determined.

Many curious heads looked out as the sheriff and his men—six men besides Green from the station—got off; then the train rumbled away in the darkness toward the surging, turbulent river, and the crowd moved toward the house.

Mr. Morris told of his absence in town on business. That Abram had been hired first as a field-hand; and that later, after his marriage, he had taken Abram from the field to look after his horse and to do the heavier work about the house and yard.

"And the woman Aggie is trustworthy?"

"I am sure of it; she used to belong to us."

"Abram is a strange negro?"

"Yes."

Then Aggie was called in to tell her story. Abram had taken the hatchet and had gone toward the railroad for

brush to make a broom. She had taken the dog and gone into the broom-grass to catch a fowl, and the last she had seen of her mistress she was walking toward the dam, which was then above the water.

"How long were you gone after the chicken?"

"I dun'no', suh; but I run um clean to de woods 'fo' I ketch um, en I walk back slow 'kase I tired."

"Were you gone an hour?"

"I spec so, suh, 'kase when I done ketch de chicken I stop fuh pick up some light-wood I see wey Abram been cuttin' wood yistiddy."

"And your mistress was not here when you came back—nor Abram?"

"No, suh, nobody; en 'e wuz so lonesome I come en look in dis house fuh Miss Nellie, but 'e ent deyyer; en I look in de bush fuh Abram, but I ent see um nudder. En de dawg run to de water en howl en ba'k en ba'k tay I tie um up in de kitchen."

"And was the boat tied to the stake this morning?"

"Yes, suh; en when I been home long time en git scare, den I look en see de boat gone."

"You don't think that your mistress

got in the boat and drifted away by accident?"

"No, suh, nebber, suh; Miss Nellie 'fraid de water lessen Mass Johnnie is wid um."

"Is Abram a good boy?"

"I dun'no', suh; I dun'no' nuffin 'tall 'bout Abram, suh; Abram is strange nigger to we."

"Did he take his things out of his room?"

"Abram t'ings? Ki! Abram ent hab nuttin' ceppen what Miss Nellie en Mass Johnnie gi' um. No, suh, dat nigger ent hab nuttin' but de close on 'e back when 'e come to we."

The sheriff paused a moment. "I think, Mr. Morris," he said at last, "that we'd better separate. You, with Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Rountree, had better take your boat and hunt in the swamp and marsh, and along the river-bank. Let Mr. Wilson, his brothers, and Green take your dog and search in the pine-barren. I'll take my men and my dogs and cross the railroad. The signal of any discovery will be three shots fired in quick succession. The gathering-place 'll be this house, where a member of the discovering party 'll meet the other parties and bring 'em to the discovery. And I beg that

you'll refrain from violence, at least until we can reach each other. We've no proof of anything—"

"Damn proof!"

"An' our only clew," the sheriff went on, "the missing boat, points to Mrs. Morris's safety." A little consultation ensued; then agreeing to the sheriff's distribution of forces, they left the house.

The sheriff's dogs — the lean, small hounds used on such occasions—were tied, and he held the ropes. There was an anxious look on his face, and he kept his dogs near the house until the party for the barren had mounted and ridden away, and the party in the boat had pushed off into the blackness of the swamp, a torch fastened at the prow casting weird, uncertain shadows. Then ordering his six men to mount and to lead his horse, he went to the room of the negro Abram and got an old shirt. The two lean little dogs were restless, but they made no sound as he led them across the railway. Once on the other side, he let them smell the shirt, and loosed them, and was about to mount, when, in the flash of a torch, he saw something in the grass.

"A hatchet!" he said to his companions, picking it up; "and clean, thank God!"

The men looked at each other, then one said, slowly, "He coulder drowned her?"

The sheriff did not answer, but followed the dogs that had trotted away with their noses to the ground.

"I'm sure the nigger came this way," the sheriff said, after a while. "Those others may find the poor young lady, but I feel sure of the nigger."

One of the men stopped short. "That nigger's got to die," he said.

"Of course," the sheriff answered, "but not by Judge Lynch's court. This circuit's got a judge that 'll hang him lawfully."

"I b'lieve Judge More will," the recalcitrant admitted, and rode on. "But," he added, "if I know Mr. John Morris, that nigger's safe to die one way or another."

They rode more rapidly now, as the dogs had quickened their pace. The moon had risen, and the riding, for men who hunted recklessly, was not bad. Through woods and across fields, over fences and streams, down by-paths and old roads, they followed the little dogs.

"We're makin' straight for the next county," the sheriff said.

"We're makin' straight for the old

Powis settlement," was answered. "Nothin' but niggers have lived there since the war, an' that nigger's there, I'll bet."

"That's so," the sheriff said. "About how many niggers live there now?"

"There ain't more than half a dozen cabins left now. We can easy manage that many."

It was a long rough ride, and in spite of their rapid pace it was some time after midnight before they saw the clearing where clustered the few cabins left of the plantation quarters of a well-known place, which in its day had yielded wealth to its owners. The moon was very bright, and, save for the sound of the horses' feet, the silence was intense.

"Look sharp," the sheriff said; "that nigger ain't sleepin' much if he's here, and he might try to slip off."

The dogs were going faster now, and yelping a little.

"Keep up, boys!" and the sheriff spurred his horse.

In a few minutes they thundered into the little settlement, where the dogs were already barking and leaping against a close-shut door. Frightened black faces began to peer out. Low exclamations and guttural ejaculations were heard as the

armed men scattered, one to each cabin, while the sheriff hammered at the door where the dogs were jumping.

"It's the sheriff!" he called, "come to get Abram Washington. Bring him out and you kin go back to your beds. We're all armed, and nobody need to try runnin'."

The door opened cautiously, and an old negro looked out. "Abram's my son, Mr. Partin," he said, "an' 'fo' Gawd he ent yer."

"No lyin', old man; the dogs brought us straight here. Don't make me burn the house down; open the door."

The door was closing, when the sheriff, springing from his horse, forced it steadily back. A shot came from within, but it ranged wild, and in an instant the sheriff's pistol covered the open room, where a smouldering fire gave light. Two of the men followed him, and one, making for the fire, pushed it into a blaze, which revealed a group of negroes—an old man, a young woman, some children, and a young man crouching behind with a gun in his hand. The sheriff walked straight up to the young man, whose teeth were chattering.

"I arrest you," he said; "come on."

"That's the feller," confirmed one of

the guard; "I've seen him at Mr. Morris's place."

"Tie him," the sheriff ordered, "while I git that gun. Give it to me, old man, or I'll take you to jail too." It was yielded up—an old-time rifle—and the sheriff smashed it against the side of the chimney, throwing the remnants into the fire. "Lead on," he said, and the young negro was taken outside. Quickly he was lifted on to a horse and tied there, while the former rider mounted behind one of his companions, and they rode out of the settlement into the woods.

"Git into the shadows," one said; "they might be fools enough to shoot."

Once in the road, the sheriff called a halt. "One of you must ride back to Mr. Morris's place and collect the other search-parties, while we make for Pineville jail. Now, Abram, come on."

"I ent done nuttin', Mr. Parin, suh," the negro urged. "I ent hot Mis' Morris."

"Who said anything 'bout Mrs. Morris?" was asked, sharply.

The negro groaned.

"You're hanging yourself, boy," the sheriff said; "but since you know, where *is* Mrs. Morris?"

"I dun'no', suh."

"Why did you run away?"

"'Kase I 'fraid Mr. Morris."

"What were you 'fraid of?"

"'Kase Mis' Morris gone."

They were riding rapidly now, and the talk was jolted out.

"Where?"

"I dun'no', suh, but I ent tech um."

"You're a damned liar."

"No, suh, I ent tech um; I des look at um."

"I'd like to gouge your eyes out!" cried one of the men, and struck him.

"None o' that!" ordered the sheriff. "And you keep your mouth shut, Abram; you'll have time to talk on your trial."

"Blast a trial!" growled the crowd.

"The rope's round his neck now," suggested one, "and I see good trees at every step."

"Please, suh, gentlemen," pleaded the shaking negro, "I ent done nuttin'."

"Shut your mouth!" ordered the sheriff again, "and ride faster. Day 'll soon break."

"You're 'fraid Mr. Morris 'll ketch us 'fore we reach the jail," laughed one of the guard. And the sheriff did not answer.

The eastern sky was gray when the party rode into Pineville, a small, straggling country town, and clattered through

its one street to the jail. To the negro, at least, it was a welcome moment, for, with his feet tied under the horse, his hands tied behind his back, and a rope with a slip-knot round his neck, he had not found the ride a pleasant one. A misstep of his horse would surely have precipitated his hanging, and he knew well that such an accident would have given much satisfaction to his captors. So he uttered a fervent "Teng Gawd!" as he was hustled into the jail gate and heard it close behind him.

Early as it was, most of the town was up and excited. Betting had been high as to whether the sheriff would get the prisoner safe into the jail, and even the winners seemed disappointed that he had accomplished this feat, although they praised his skilful management. But the sheriff knew that if the lady's body was found, that if Mr. Morris could find any proof against the negro, that if Mr. Morris even expressed a wish that the negro should hang, the whole town would side with him instantly; and the sheriff knew, further, that in such an emergency he would be the negro's only defender, and that the jail could easily be carried by the mob.

All these thoughts had been with him

during the long night, and though he himself was quite willing to hang the negro, being fully persuaded of his guilt, he was determined to do his official duty, and to save the prisoner's life until sentence was lawfully passed on him. But how? If he could quiet the town before the day brightened, he had a plan, but to accomplish this seemed wellnigh impossible.

He handcuffed the prisoner and locked him into a cell, then advised his escort to go and get food, as before the day was done—indeed, just as soon as Mr. Morris should reach the town—he would probably need them to help him defend the jail.

They nodded among themselves, and winked, and laughed a little, and one said, "Right good play-actin'"; and watching, the sheriff knew that he could depend on only one man, his own brother, to help him. But he sent him off along with the others, and was glad to see that the crowd of townspeople went with his guard, listening eagerly to the details of the suspected tragedy and the subsequent hunt. This was his only chance, and he went at once to the negro's cell.

"Now, Abram," he said, "if you don't want to be a dead man in an hour's time, you'd better do exactly what I tell you."

"Yes, suh, please Gawd."

"Put on this old hat," handing him one, "and pull it down over your eyes, and follow me. When we get outside, you walk along with me like any ordinary nigger going to his work; and remember, if you stir hand or foot more than a walk, you are a dead man. Come on."

There was a back way out of the jail, and to this the sheriff went. Once outside, he walked briskly, the negro keeping step with him diligently. They did not meet any one, and before very long they reached the sheriff's house, which stood on the outskirts of the town. Being a widower, he knocked peremptorily on the door, and when it was opened by his son, he marched his prisoner in without explanation.

"Shut the door, Willie," he said; "and load the Winchester."

"Please, suh—" interjected the negro.

For answer, the sheriff took a key from the shelf, and led him out of the back door to where, down a few steps, there was another door leading into an underground cellar.

"Now, Abram," he said, "you're to keep quiet in here till I can take you to the city jail. There is no use your trying to escape, because my two boys 'll be

about here all day with their repeating rifles, and they can shoot."

"Yes, suh."

"And whoever unlocks this door and tells you to come out, you do it, and do it quick."

"Yes, suh."

Locking the door, the sheriff turned to his son. "You and Charlie must watch that door all day, Willie," he said; "but you musn't seem to watch it; and keep your guns handy, and if that nigger tries to get away, kill him; don't hesitate. I must go back to the jail and make out like he's there. And tell Charlie to feed the horse and hitch him to the buggy, and let him stand ready in the stable, for when I'll want him I'll want him quick. Above all things, don't let anybody know that the nigger's here. But keep the cellar key in your pocket, and shoot if he tries to run. If your uncle Jim comes, do whatever he tells you, but nobody else, lessen they bring a note from me. Now remember. I'm trusting you, boy; and don't you make any mistake about killing the nigger if he tries to escape."

"All right," the boy answered, cheerfully, and the father went away. He almost ran to the jail, and entering once more by the back door, found things un-

disturbed. Presently his brother called to him, and the gates and doors being opened, came in, bringing a waiter of hot food and coffee.

"I told Jinnie you'd not like to leave the jail," he said, "an' she fixed this up."

"Jinnie's mighty good," the sheriff answered, "and sometimes a woman's mighty handy to have about—sometimes; but I'd not leave one out in the country like Mr. Morris did; no, sir, not in these days. We could do it before the war and during the war, but not now. The old niggers were taught some decency; but these young ones! God help us, for I don't see any safety for this country 'cept Judge Lynch. And I'll tell you this is my first an' last term as sheriff. The work's too dirty."

"Buck Thomas was a boss sheriff," his brother answered; "he found the niggers all right, but the niggers never found the jail, and the niggers were 'fraid to death of him."

"Maybe Buck was right," the sheriff said, "and 'twas heap the easiest way; but here comes the town."

The two men went to the window and saw a crowd of people advancing down the road, led by Mr. Morris and his friends on horseback.

"I b'lieve you're the only man in this town that 'll stand by me, Jim," the sheriff said. "I swore in six last night, and I see 'em all in that crowd. Poor Mr. Morris! in his place I'd do just what he's doin'. Blest if yonder ain't Doty Buxton comin' to help me! I'll let him in; but see here, Jim, I'm goin' to send Doty to telegraph to the city for Judge More, and I want you to slip out the back way right now, and run to my house, and tell Willie to give you the buggy and the nigger, and you drive that nigger into the city. Of course you'll kill him if he tries to escape."

"The nigger ain't here!"

"I'm no fool, Jim. And I'll hold this jail, me and Doty, as long as possible, and you drive like hell! You see?"

"I didn't know you really *wanted* to save the nigger," his brother remonstrated; "nobody b'lieves that."

"I don't, as a nigger. But you go on now, and I'll send Doty with the telegram, and make time by talkin' to Mr. Morris. I don't think they've found anything; if they had, they'd have come a-galloping, and the devil himself couldn't have stopped 'em. Gosh, but it's awful! Who knows what that nigger's done! When I look at Mr. Morris, I wish you

fellers had overpowered me last night, and had fixed things."

He let his brother out at the back, then went round to the front gate, where he met the man whom he called Doty Buxton.

"Go telegraph Judge More the facts of the case," he said, "an' ask him to come. I don't believe I'll need any men if he'll come; and besides, he and Mr. Morris are friends."

As the man turned away, one of the horsemen rode up to the sheriff.

"We demand that negro," he said.

"I supposed that was what you'd come for, Mr. Mitchell," the sheriff answered; "but you know, sir, that as much as I'd like to oblige you, I'm bound to protect the man. He swears that he's never touched Mrs. Morris."

"Great God, sheriff! how can you mention the thing quietly? You know—"

"Yes, I know; and I know that I'll never do the dirty work of a sheriff a day after my term's up. But we haven't any proof against this nigger except that he ran away—"

"Isn't that enough when the lady can't be found, nor a trace of her?"

"I found the hatchet."

"And—!"

"It was clean, thank God!"

Mr. Mitchell jerked the reins so violently that his horse, tired as he was, reared and plunged.

"Mr. Morris declines to speak with you," he went on, when the horse had quieted down, "but he's determined that the negro shall not escape, and the whole county 'll back him."

"I know that," the sheriff answered, patiently, "and in his place I'd do the same thing; but in my place I must do my official duty. I'll not let the nigger escape, you may be sure of that, and I've telegraphed for Judge More to come out here. I've telegraphed the whole case. Surely Mr. Morris 'll trust Judge More?"

Mitchell dragged at his mustache. "Poor Morris is nearly dead," he said.

"Of course; won't he go and eat and rest till Judge More comes? Every house in the town 'll be open to him."

"No; he'll not wait nor rest; and we're determined to hang that negro."

"It 'll be mighty hard to shed our blood —friends and neighbors," remonstrated the sheriff — "and all over a worthless nigger."

"That's your lookout," Mr. Mitchell answered. "A trial and a big funeral is glory for a negro, and the penitentiary

means nothing to them but free board and clothes. I tell you, sheriff, lynching is the only thing that affects them."

"You won't wait even until I get an answer from Judge More?"

"Well, to please you, I'll ask." And Mitchell rode back to his companions.

The conference between the leaders was longer than the sheriff had hoped, and before he was again approached Doty Buxton had returned, saying that Judge More's answer would be sent to the jail just as soon as it came.

"You'll stand by me, Doty?" the sheriff asked.

"'Cause I like you, Mr. Partin," Doty answered, slowly; "not 'cause I want to save the nigger. I b'lieve in my soul he's done drowned the po' lady's body."

"All right; you go inside and be ready to chain the gate if I am run in." Then he waited for the return of the envoy.

John Morris sat on his horse quite apart even from his own friends, and after a few words with him, Mitchell had gone to the group of horsemen about whom the townsmen were gathered. The sheriff did not know what this portended, but he waited patiently, leaning against the wall of the jail and whittling a stick. He knew quite well that all these men

were friendly to him; that they understood his position perfectly, and that they expected him to pretend to do his duty to a reasonable extent, and so far their good-nature would last; but he knew equally well that in their eyes the negro had put himself beyond the pale of the law; that they were determined to hang him and would do it at any cost; and that the only mercy which the culprit could expect from this upper class to which Mr. Morris belonged was that his death would be quick and quiet. He knew also that if they found out that he was in earnest in defending the prisoner he himself would be in danger not only from Mr. Morris and his friends, but from the townsmen as well. Of course all this could be avoided by showing them that the jail was empty; but to do this would be at this stage to insure the fugitive's capture and death. To save the negro he must hold the jail as long as possible, and if he had to shoot, shoot into the ground. All this was quite clear to him; what was not clear was what these men would do when they found that he had saved the negro, and they had stormed an empty jail.

He was an old soldier, and had been in many battles; he had fought hardest when

he knew that things were most hopeless; he had risked his life recklessly, and death had been as nothing to him when he had thought that he would die for his country. But now—now to risk his life for a negro, for a worthless creature who he thought deserved hanging—was this his duty? Why not say, "I have sent the negro to the city"? How quickly those fierce horsemen would dash away down the road! Well, why not? He drew himself up. He was not going to turn coward at this late day. His duty lay very plain before him, and he would not flinch. And he fixed his eyes once more on the little stick he was cutting, and waited.

Presently he saw a movement in the crowd, and the thought flashed across him that they might capture him suddenly while he stood there alone and unarmed. He stepped quickly to the gate, where Doty Buxton waited, and standing in the opening, asked the crowd to stand back, and to send Mr. Mitchell to tell him what the decision was. There was a moment's pause; then Mitchell rode forward.

"Mr. Morris says that Judge More cannot help matters. The negro must die, and at once. We don't want to hurt you, and we don't want to destroy public

property, but we are going to have that wretch if we have to burn the jail down. Will you stop all this by delivering the prisoner to us?"

The sheriff shook his head. "I can't do that, sir. But one thing I do ask, that you'll give me warning before you set fire to the jail."

"If that 'll make you give up, we'll set fire now."

"I didn't say it 'd make me surrender, but only that I'd like to throw a few things out — like Doty Buxton, for instance," smiling a little.

"All right; when we stop trying to break in, we'll be making ready to smoke you out. The jail's empty but for this negro, I hear."

"Yes, the jail's empty; but don't you think you oughter give me a little time to weigh matters?"

"Is there any chance of your surrendering?"

"To be perfectly honest," the sheriff answered, "there isn't." Then, seeing the crowd approaching, he slipped inside the heavy gate, and Doty Buxton chained it. "Now, Doty," he said, "we'll peep through these auger-holes and watch 'em; and when you see' em coming near, you must shoot through these lower holes. Shoot

into the ground just in front of 'em. It's nasty to have the dirt jumpin' up right where you've got to walk. I know how it feels. I always wanted to hold up both feet at once. I reckon they've gone to get a log to batter down the gate. They can do it, but I'll make 'em take as long as I can. We musn't hurt anybody, Doty, but we must protect the State property as far as we're able. Here they come! Keep the dirt dancin', Doty. See that? They don't like it. I told you they'd want to take up both feet at once. When bullets are flying round your head, you can't help yourself, but it's hard to put your feet down right where the nasty little things are peckin' about. Here they come again! Keep it up, Doty. See that? They've stopped again. They ain't real mad with me yet, the boys ain't; only Mr. Morris and his friends are mad. The boys think I'm just pretending to do my duty for the looks of it; but I ain't. Gosh! Now they've fixed it! With Mr. Morris at the front end of that log, there's no hope of scare. He'd walk over dynamite to get that nigger. Poor feller! Here they come at a run! Don't hurt anybody, Doty. Bang! Wait; I'll call a halt by knocking on the gate; it 'll gain us a little more time."

"What do you want?" came in answer to the sheriff's taps.

"I'll arrest every man of you for destroying State property," the sheriff answered.

"All right; come do it quick," was the response. "We're waitin', but we won't wait long."

"I reckon we'll have to go inside, Doty," the sheriff said; then to the attacking party, "If you'll wait till Judge More comes, I promise you the nigger 'll hang."

For answer there was another blow on the gate.

"Remember, I've warned you!" the sheriff called.

"Hush that rot," was the answer, followed by a third blow.

The sheriff and Doty retreated to the jail, and the attack went on. It was a two-story building of wood, but very strongly built, and unless they tried fire the sheriff hoped to keep the besiegers at bay for a little while yet. He stationed Doty at one window, and himself took position at another, each with loaded pistols, which were only to be used as before —to make "the dirt jump."

"To tell you the truth, Doty," the sheriff said, "if you boys had had any

sense, you'd have overpowered me last night, and we'd not have had all this trouble."

"We wanted to," Doty answered, "but you're new at the business, an' you talked so big we didn't like to make you feel little."

"Here they come!" the sheriff went on, as the stout gate swayed inwards. "One more good lick an' it's down. That's it. Now keep the dirt dancin', Doty, but don't hurt anybody."

Mr. Morris was in the lead, and apparently did not see the "dancin' dirt," for he approached the jail at a run.

"It's no use, Doty," the sheriff said; "all we can do is to wait till they get in, for I'm not going to shoot anybody. It may be wrong to lynch, but in a case like this it's the rightest wrong that ever was." So the sheriff sat there thinking, while Doty watched the attack from the window.

According to his calculations of time and distance, the sheriff thought that the prisoner was now so far on his way as to be almost out of danger by pursuit, and his mind was busy with the other question as to what would happen when the jail was found to be empty. He had not heard from Judge More, but the answer

could not have reached him after the attack began. He felt sure that the judge would come, and come by the earliest train, which was now nearly due.

"The old man 'll come if he can," he said to himself, "and he'll help me if he comes; and I wish the train would hurry."

He felt glad when he remembered that he had given the keys of the cells to his brother, for though he would try to save further destruction of property by telling the mob that the jail was empty, he felt quite sure that they would not believe him, and in default of keys, would break open every door in the building; which obstinacy would grant him more time in which to hope for Judge More and arbitration. That it was possible for him to slip out once the besiegers had broken in never occurred to him; his only thought was to stay where he was until the end came, whatever that might be. They were taking longer than he had expected, and every moment was a gain.

Doty Buxton came in from the hall, where he had gone to watch operations. "The do' is givin'," he said; "what 'll you do?"

"Nothin'," the sheriff answered, slowly.

"Won't you give 'em the keys?"

"I haven't got 'em."

"Gosh!" and Doty's eyes got big as saucers.

Very soon the outer door was down, and the crowd came trooping in, all save John Morris, who stopped in the hallway. He seemed to be unable even to look at the sheriff, and the sheriff felt the averted face more than he would have felt a blow.

"We want the keys," Mitchell said.

The sheriff, who had risen, stood with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes, filled with sympathy, fastened on Mr. Morris, standing looking blankly down the empty hall.

"I haven't got the keys, Mr. Mitchell," he answered.

"Oh, come off!" cried one of the townsmen. "Rocky!" cried another. "Yo' granny's hat!" came from a third; while Doty Buxton said, gravely, "Give up, Partin; we've humored this duty business long enough."

"Do I understand you to say that you won't give up the keys?" Mitchell demanded, scornfully.

"No," the sheriff retorted, a little hotly, "you don't understand anything of the kind. I said that I didn't have the keys; and further," he added, after a moment's pause, "I say that this jail is empty."

There was silence for a moment, while the men looked at one another incredulously; then the jeering began again.

"There is nothing to do but to break open the cells," Morris said, sharply, but without turning his head. "We trusted the sheriff last night, and he outwitted us; we must not trust him again."

The sheriff's eyes flashed, and the blood sprang to his face. The crowd stood eagerly silent; but after a second the sheriff answered, quietly,

"You may say what you please to me, Mr. Morris, and I'll not resent it under these circumstances, but I'll swear the jail's empty."

For answer Morris drove an axe furiously against the nearest cell door, and the crowd followed suit. There were not many cells, and as he looked from a window the sheriff counted the doors as they fell in, and listened for the whistle of the train that he hoped would bring Judge More. The doors were going down rapidly, and as each yielded the sheriff could hear cries and demonstrations. What would they do when the last one fell?

Presently Doty Buxton, who had been making observations, came in, pale and excited. "You'd better git yo' pistols," he said, "an' I'll git mine, for they're

gittin' madder an' madder every time he ain't there."

"Well," the sheriff answered, "I want you to witness that I ain't armed. My pistols are over there on the table, unloaded. Thank the good Lord!" he exclaimed, suddenly; "there's the train, an' Judge More! I hope he'll come right along."

"An' there goes the last do'!" said Doty, as, after a crash and a momentary silence, oaths and ejaculations filled the air. He drew near the sheriff, but the sheriff moved away.

"Stand back," he said; "you've got little children."

In an instant the crowd rushed in, headed by Morris, whose burning eyes seemed to be starting from his drawn white face. Like a flash Doty sprang forward and wrenched an axe from the infuriated man, crying out, "Partin ain't armed!"

For answer a blow from Morris's fist dropped the sheriff like a dead man. A sudden silence fell, and Morris, standing over his fallen foe, looked about him as if dazed. For an instant he stood so, then with a violent movement he pushed back the crowding men, and lifting the sheriff, dragged him toward the open window.

"Give him air," he ordered, "and go for the doctor, and for cold water!" He laid Partin flat and dragged open his collar. "He's not dead—see there; I struck him on the temple; under the ear would have killed him, but not this, not this! Give me that water, and plenty of it, and move back. He's not dead, no; and I didn't mean to kill him; but he has worked against me all night, and I didn't think a white man would do it."

"He's comin' round, Mr. Morris," said Doty, who knelt on the other side of the sheriff; "an' he didn't bear no malice against you—don't fret; but it's a good thing I jerked that axe outer yo' hand! See, he's ketchin' his breath; it's all right," as Partin opened his eyes slowly and looked about him.

A sound like a sigh came from the crowd, then a voice said, "Here comes Judge More."

Morris was still holding his wet handkerchief on the sheriff's head when the old judge came in.

"My dear boy!" he said, laying his hand on John Morris's shoulder. But Morris shook his head.

"Let's talk business, Judge More," he said, "and let's get Partin into a chair

where he can rest; I've just knocked him over."

Then Morris left the room, and Mitchell with him, going to the far side of the jail-yard, where they walked up and down in silence. It was not long before Judge More and the sheriff joined them.

"The evidence was too slight for lynching," the judge said, looking straight into John Morris's eyes.

"Great God!" Morris cried, and struck his hands together.

"What more do you want?" Mitchell demanded, angrily. "His wife has disappeared, and the negro ran away."

"True, and I'll see to the case myself; but I'm glad that you did not hang the negro."

A boy came up with a telegram.

"From Jim, I reckon," the sheriff said, taking it. "No; it's for you, Mr. Morris."

It was torn open hastily; then Morris looked from one to the other with a blank, scared face, while the paper fluttered from his hold.

Mitchell caught it, and read aloud slowly, as if he did not believe his eyes:

"'Am safe. Will be out on the ten-o'clock train. ELEANOR.'"

Morris stood there, shaking, and sobbing hard, dry sobs.

"It 'll kill him!" the sheriff said. "Quick, some whiskey!"

A flask was forced between the blue, trembling lips.

"Drink, old fellow," and Mitchell put his arm about Morris's shoulders. "It's all right now, thank God!"

Morris was leaning against his friend, sobbing like a woman. The sheriff drew his coat-sleeve across his eyes, and shook his head.

"What made the nigger run away?" he said, slowly—adding, as if to himself, "God help us!"

A vehicle was borrowed, and the judge and the sheriff drove with John Morris over to the station to meet the ten-o'clock train. The sheriff and the judge remained in the little carriage, and the station agent did his best to leave the whole platform to John Morris. As the moments went by the look of anxious agony grew deeper on the face of the waiting man. The sheriff's ominous words, falling like a pall over the first flash of his happiness, had filled his mind with wordless terrors. He could scarcely breathe or move, and could not speak when his wife stepped off and put her hands in his. She looked up,

and without a query, without a word of explanation, answered the anguished questioning of his eyes, whispering,

"He did not touch me."

Morris staggered a little, then drawing her hand through his arm, he led her to the carriage. She shrank back when she saw the judge and the sheriff on the front seat; but Morris saying, "They must hear your story, dear," she stepped in.

"We are very thankful to see you, Mrs. Morris," the judge said, without turning his head, when the sheriff had touched up the horse and they moved away; "and if you feel able to tell us how it all happened, it 'll save time and ease your mind. This is Mr. Partin, the sheriff."

Mrs. Morris looked at the backs of the men in front of her; at their heads that were so studiously held in position that they could not even have glanced at each other; then up at her husband, appealingly.

"Tell it," he said, quietly, and laid his hand on hers that were wrung together in her lap. "You sent Aggie to catch the chickens, and the dog went with her?"

"Yes," fixing her eyes on his; "and I sent"—she stopped with a shiver, and her husband said, "Abram"—"to cut some bushes to make a broom," she went on.

"I had been for a walk to the old house, and as I came back I laid my gloves and a bit of vine on the steps, intending to return at once; but I wished to see if the boat was safe, for the water was rising so rapidly." She paused, as if to catch her breath, then, with her eyes still fixed on her husband, she went on, "I did not think that it was safe, and I untied the rope and picked up the paddle that was lying on the dam, intending to drag the boat farther up and tie it to a tree." She stopped again. Her husband put his arm about her.

"And then?" he said.

"And then—something, I don't know what; not a sound, but something—something made me turn, and I saw him—saw him coming—saw him stealing up behind me—with the hatchet in his hand, and a look—a look"—closing her eyes as if in horror—"such an awful, awful look! And everybody gone. Oh, John!" she gasped, and clinging to her husband, she broke into hysterical sobs, while the judge gripped his walking-stick and cleared his throat, and the sheriff swore fiercely under his breath.

"I was paralyzed," she went on, recovering herself, "and when he saw me looking he stopped. The next moment

he threw the hatchet at me, and began to run toward me. The hatchet struck my foot, and the blow roused me, and I sprang into the boat. There were no trees just there, and jumping in, I pushed the boat off into the deep water. He picked up the hatchet and shook it at me, but the water was too deep for him to reach me, and he ran back along the dam and turned toward the railroad embankment. I was so terrified I could scarcely breathe; I pushed frantically in and out between the trees, farther and farther into the swamp. I was afraid that he would go round to the bridge and come down the bank to where the outlet from the swamp is and catch me there, but in a little while I saw where the rising water had broken the dam, and the current was rushing through and out to the river. The current caught the boat and swept it through the break. Oh, I was so glad! I'm so afraid of water, but not then. I used the paddle as a rudder, and to push floating timber away. My foot was hurting me, and I looked at last and saw that it was cut."

A groan came from the judge, and the sheriff's head drooped.

"All day I drifted, and all night. I was so thirsty, and I grew so weak. At daylight this morning I found myself in

a wide sheet of water, with marshes all round, and I saw a steamboat coming. I tied my handkerchief to the paddle and waved it, and they picked me up. And, John, I did not tell them anything except that the freshet had swept me away. They were kind to me, and a friendly woman bound up my foot. We got to town this morning early, and the captain lent me five dollars, John—Captain Meakin—so I telegraphed you, and took a carriage to the station and came out. Have —have you caught him? And, oh—but I am afraid—afraid!" And again she broke into hysterical sobs.

She asked no explanation. The negro's guilt was so burned in on her mind, that she was sure that all knew it as well as she.

"You need have no further fears," her husband comforted. And the judge shook his head, and the sheriff swore again.

A white-haired woman in rusty black stood talking to a negro convict. It was in a stockade prison camp in the hill country. She had been a slave-owner once, long ago, and now for her mission-work taught on Sundays in the stockade, trying to better the negroes penned there.

This was a new prisoner, and she was asking him of himself.

"How long are you in for?" she asked.

"Fuhrebber, ma'm; fuh des es long es I lib," the negro answered, looking down to where he was making marks on the ground with his toes.

"And how did you get such a dreadful sentence?"

"I ent do much, ma'm; I des scare a white lady."

A wave of revulsion swept over the teacher, and involuntarily she stepped back. The negro looked up and grinned.

"De hatchet des cut 'e foot a little bit; but I trow de hatchet. I ent tech um; no, ma'm. Den atterwards 'e baby daid; den dey say I muss stay yer fuhrebber. I ent sorry, 'kase I know say I hab to wuck anywheys I is; if I stay yer, if I go 'way, I hab to wuck. En I know say if I git outer dis place Mr. Morris 'll kill me sho—des sho. So I like fuh stay yer berry well."

And the teacher went away, wondering if her work—if *any* work—would avail; and what answer the future would have for this awful problem.

# A Snipe-Hunt

## A Story of Jim-Ned Creek

BY M. E. M. DAVIS

"I AIN'T sayin' nothin' ag'inst the women o' Jim-Ned Creek *ez women*," said Mr. Pinson; "an' what's more, I'll spit on my hands an' lay out any man ez 'll dassen to sass 'em. But *ez wives* the women o' Jim-Ned air the outbeatenes' critters in creation!"

These remarks, uttered in an oracular tone, were received with grave approbation by the half a dozen idlers gathered about the mesquite fire in Bishop's store. Old Bishop himself, sorting over some trace-chains behind the counter, nodded grimly, and then smiled, his wintry face grown suddenly tender.

"You've shore struck it, Newt," assented Joe Trimble. "You never kin tell how ary one of 'em 'll ack under any succumstances."

Jack Carter and Sid Northcutt, the

only bachelors present, grinned and winked slyly at each other.

"You boys neenter to be so brash," drawled Mr. Pinson's son-in-law, Sam Leggett, from his perch on a barrel of pecans; "jest you wait ontell Minty Cullum an' Loo Slater gits a tight holt! Them gals is ez meek ez lambs—now. But so was Mis' Pinson an' Mis' Trimble in their day an' time, I reckon. I know Becky Leggett was."

"The studdies'-goin' woman on Jim-Ned," continued Mr. Pinson, ignoring these interruptions, "is Mis' Cullum. An' yit, Tobe Cullum ain't no safeter than anybody else—considerin' of Sissy Cullum ez a wife!"

Mr. Trimble opened his lips to speak, but shut them again hastily, looking a little scared, and an awkward silence fell on the group.

For the shadow of Mrs. Cullum herself had advanced through the wide door-way, and lay athwart the puncheon floor; and that lady, a large, comfortable-looking, middle-aged person, with a motherly face and a kindly smile, after a momentary survey of the scene before her, walked briskly in. She shook hands across the counter with the storekeeper, and passed the time of day all around.

But Hines, the new clerk, shuffled forward eagerly to wait on her. Bud was a sallow-faced, thin-chested, gawky youth from the States, who had wandered into these parts in search of health and employment. He was not yet used to the somewhat drastic ways of Jim-Ned, and there was a homesick look in his watery blue eyes; he smiled bashfully at her while he measured off calico and weighed sugar, and he followed her out to the horse-block when she had concluded her lengthy spell of shopping.

"You better put on a thicker coat, Bud," she said, pushing back her sunbonnet and looking down at him from the saddle before she moved off. "You've got a rackety cough. I reckon I'll have to make you some mullein surrup."

"Oh, Mis' Cullum, don't trouble yourself about me," Mr. Hines cried, gratefully, a lump rising in his throat as he watched her ride away.

The loungers in the store had strolled out on the porch. "Mis' Cullum cert'n'y is a sister in Zion," remarked Mr. Trimble, gazing admiringly at her retreating figure.

"M-m-m—y-e-e-s," admitted Mr. Pinson. "But," he added, darkly, after a meditative pause, "Sissy Cullum is a

wife, an' the women o' Jim-Ned, *ez wives,* air liable to conniptions."

Mrs. Cullum jogged slowly along the brown, wheel-rifted road which followed the windings of the creek. It was late in November. A brisk little norther was blowing, and the nuts dropping from the pecan-trees in the hollows filled the dusky stillness with a continuous rattling sound. There was a sprinkling of belated cotton-bolls on the stubbly fields to the right of the road; a few ragged sunflowers were still abloom in the fence corners, where the pokeberries were red-ripe on their tall stalks.

"I must lay in some poke-root for Tobe's knee-j'ints," mused Mrs. Cullum, as she turned into the lane which led to her own door-yard. "Pore Tobe! them j'ints o' his'n is mighty oncertain. Why, Tobe!" she exclaimed, aloud, as her nag stopped and neighed a friendly greeting to the object of her own solicitude, "where air you bound for?"

Mr. Cullum laid an arm across the horse's neck. He was a big, loose-jointed man, with iron-gray hair, square jaws, and keen, steady, dark eyes. "Well, ma," he said, with a touch of reluctance in his dragging tones, "there's a lodge meetin' at Ebenezer Church to-night, an' I got

Mintry to give me my supper early, so's I could go. I—"

"All right, Tobe," interrupted his wife, cheerfully; "a passel of men prancin' around with a goat oncet a month ain't much harm, I reckon. You go 'long, honey; I'll set up for you."

"Sissy is that soft an' innercent an' mild," muttered Mr. Cullum, striding away in the gathering twilight, "that a suckin' baby could wrop her aroun' its finger—much lessen me!"

About ten o'clock the same night Granny Carnes, peeping through a chink in the wall beside her bed, saw a squad of men hurrying afoot down the road from the direction of Ebenezer Church. "Them boys is up to some devil*mint*, Uncle Dick," she remarked, placidly, to her rheumatic old husband.

Uncle Dick laughed, a soft, toothless laugh. "I ain't begrudgin' 'em the fun," he sighed, turning on his pillow, "but I wisht to the Lord I was along!"

The "boys" crossed the creek below Bishop's and entered the shinn-oak prairie on the farther side.

"Nance ast mighty particular about the lodge meetin'," observed Newt Pinson to Mr. Cullum, who headed the nocturnal expedition; "she know'd it wa'n't

the regular night, an' she suspicioned sompn, Nance did."

"Sissy didn't," laughed Tobe, complacently. "Sissy is that soft an' innercent an' mild that a suckin' baby could wrop her aroun' its finger—much lessen me!"

Bud Hines, in the rear with the others, was in a quiver of excitement. He stumbled along, shifting Sid Northcutt's rifle from one shoulder to the other, and listening open-mouthed to Jack Carter's directions. "You know, Bud," said that young gentleman, gravely, "it ain't every man that gets a chance to go on a snipe-hunt. And if you've got any grit—"

"I've got plenty of it," interrupted Mr. Hines, vaingloriously. He was, indeed, inwardly—and outwardly—bursting with pride. "I thought they tuk me for a plumb fool," he kept saying over and over to himself. "They ain't never noticed me before 'cepn to make fun of me; an' all at oncet Mr. Tobe Cullum an' Mr. Newt Pinson ups an' asts me to go on a snipe-hunt, an' even p'oposes to give me the best place in it. An' I've got Mr. Sid's rifle, an' Mr. Jack is tellin' of me how! Lord, I wouldn't of believed it ef I wa'n't right here! Won't ma be proud when I write her about it!"

"You've got to whistle all the time,"

Jack continued, breaking in upon these blissful reflections; "if you don't, they won't come."

"Oh, I'll whistle," declared Bud, jauntily.

Sam Leggett's snigger was dexterously turned into a cough by a punch in his ribs from Mr. Trimble's elbow, and they trudged on in silence until they reached Buck Snort Gully, a deep ravine running from the prairie into a stretch of heavy timber beyond, known as The Rough.

Here they stopped, and Sid Northcutt produced a coarse bag, whose mouth was held open by a barrel hoop, and a tallow candle, which he lighted and handed to the elate hunter. "Now, Bud," Mr. Cullum said, when the bag was set on the edge of the gully, with its mouth towards the prairie, "you jest scrooch down behind this here sack an' hold the candle. You kin lay the rifle back of you, in case a wild-cat or a cougar prowls up. An' you whistle jest as hard an' as continual as you can, whilse the balance of us beats aroun' an' drives in the snipe. They'll run fer the candle ever' time. An' the minit that sack is full of snipe, all you've got to do is to pull out the prop, an' they're yourn."

"All right, Mr. Tobe," responded Bud,

squatting down and clutching the candle, his face radiant with expectation.

The crowd scattered, and for a few moments made a noisy pretence of beating the shinn-oak thickets for imaginary snipe.

"Keep a-whisslin', Bud!" Mr. Cullum shouted, from the far edge of the prairie.

A prolonged whistle, with trills and flourishes, was the response; and the conspirators, bursting with restrained laughter, plunged into the ford and separated, making each for his own fireside.

Mrs. Cullum was nodding over the hearth-stone when her husband came in. The six girls, from Minty—Jack Carter's buxom sweetheart—to Little Sis, the baby, were long abed. The hands of the wooden clock on the high mantel-shelf pointed to half-past twelve. "Well, pa," Sissy said, good-humoredly, reaching out for the shovel and beginning to cover up the fire, "you've cavorted pretty late this time! What's the matter?" she added, suspiciously; "you ack like you've been drinkin'!"

For Tobe was rolling about the room in an ecstasy of uproarious mirth.

"I 'ain't teched nary drop, Sissy," Mr. Cullum returned, "but ever' time I think about that fool Bud Hines a-settin' out

yander at Buck Snort, holdin' of a candle, and whisslin' fer snipe to run into that coffee-sack, I—oh Lord!"

He stopped to slap his thighs and roar again. Finally, wiping the tears of enjoyment from his eyes, he related the story of the night's adventure.

"Air you tellin' me, Tobe Cullum," his wife said, when she had heard him to the end—"air you p'intedly tellin' me that you've took Bud Hines *snipin'*? An' that you've left that sickly, consumpted young man a-settin' out there by hisse'f to catch his death of cold; or maybe git his blood sucked out by a catamount!"

"Shucks, Sissy!" replied Tobe; "nothin' ain't goin' to hurt him. He's sech a derned fool that a catamount wouldn't tech him with a ten-foot pole! An' him a-whisslin' fer them snipe—oh Lord!"

"Tobe Cullum," said Mrs. Cullum, sternly, "you go saddle Buster this minit and ride out to Buck Snort after Bud Hines."

"Why, honey—" remonstrated Tobe.

"Don't you honey me," she interrupted, wrathfully. "You saddle that horse this minit an' fetch that consumpted boy home."

Tobe ceased to laugh. His big jaws set themselves suddenly square. "I'll

do no sech fool thing," he declared, doggedly, "an' have the len'th an' brea'th o' Jim-Ned makin' fun o' me."

"Very well," said his wife, with equal determination, "ef you don't go, I will. But I give you fair warnin', Tobe Cullum, that ef you don't go, I'll never speak to you again whilse my head is hot."

Tobe snorted incredulously; but he sneaked out to the stable after her, and when she had saddled and mounted Buster, he followed her on foot, running noiselessly some distance behind her, keeping her well in sight, and dodging into the deeper shadows when she chanced to look around.

"I didn't know Sissy had so much spunk," he muttered, panting in her wake at last across the shinn-oak prairie. "Lord, how blazin' mad she is! But shucks! she'll git over it by mornin'."

Mr. Hines was shivering with cold. He still whistled mechanically, but the hand that held the sputtering candle shook to the trip-hammer thumping of his heart. "The balance of 'em must of got lost," he thought, listening to the lonesome howl of the wind across the prairie. "It's too c-cold for snipe, I reckon. I wisht I'd staid at home. I c-can't w-whistle any longer," he whim-

pered aloud, dropping the candle-end, the lask spark of courage oozing out of his nerveless fingers. He stood up, straining his eyes down the black gully and across the dreary waste around him. "Mr. T-o-o-be!" he called, feebly, and the wavering echoes of his voice came back to him mingled with an ominous sound. "Oh, Lordy! what is that?" he stammered. He sank to the ground, grabbing wildly for his gun. "It's a cougar! I hear him trompin' up from the creek! It's a c-cougar! He's c-comin' closter! Oh, Lordy!"

"Hello, Bud," called Mrs. Cullum, cheerily. She slipped from the saddle as she spoke and caught the half-fainting snipe-hunter in her motherly arms.

"Ain't you 'shamed of yourse'f to let a passel o' no-'count men fool you this-a-way?" she demanded, sternly, when he had somewhat recovered himself. "Get up behind me. I'm goin' to take you to Mis' Bishop's, where you belong. No, don't you dassen to tech any o' that trash!"

Mr. Hines, feeling very humble and abashed, climbed up behind her, and they rode away, leaving the snipe-hunting gear, including Sid Northcutt's valuable rifle, on the edge of the gully.

She left him at Bishop's, charging him to swallow before going to bed a "dost" of the home-brewed chill medicine from a squat bottle she handed him.

"He cert'n'y is weaker'n stump-water," she murmured, as she turned her horse's head; "but he's sickly an' consumpted, an' he's jest about the age my Bud would of been if he'd lived."

And thinking of her first-born and only son, who died in babyhood, she rode homeward in the dim chill starlight. Tobe, spent and foot-sore, followed warily, carrying the abandoned rifle.

## II

Consternation reigned the "len'th an' brea'th" of Jim-Ned. Mrs. Cullum—placid and easy-going Mrs. Tobe—under the same roof with him, actually had not spoken to her lawful and wedded husband since the snipe-hunt ten days ago come Monday!

"It's plumb scan'lous!" Mrs. Pinson exclaimed, at her daughter's quilting. "I never would of thought sech a thing of Sissy—never!"

"As ef the boys of Jim-Ned couldn't have a little innercent fun without Mis'

Cullum settin' in jedgment on 'em!" sniffed Mrs. Leggett.

"Shet up, Becky Leggett," said her mother, severely. "By time you've put up with a man's capers fer twenty-five years, like Sissy Cullum have, you'll have the right to talk, an' not before."

"They say Tobe is wellnigh out'n his mind," remarked Mrs. Trimble. "Ez fer that soft-headed Bud Hines, he have fair fattened on that snipe-hunt. He's gittin' ez sassy an' mischeevous ez Jack Carter hisse'f."

This last statement was literally true. The victim of Tobe Cullum's disastrous practical joke had become on a sudden case-hardened, as it were. The consumptive pallor had miraculously disappeared from his cheeks and the homesick look from his eyes. He bore the merciless chaffing at Bishop's with devil-may-care good-nature, and he besought Mrs. Cullum, almost with tears in his eyes, to "let up on Mr. Tobe."

"I was sech a dern fool, Mis' Cullum," he candidly confessed, "that I don't blame Mr. Tobe fer puttin' up a job on me. Besides," he added, his eyes twinkling shrewdly, "I'm goin' to git even. I'm layin' off to take Jim Belcher,

that biggetty drummer from Waco, a-snipin' out Buck Snort next Sat'day night. He's a bigger idjit than I ever was."

"You ten' to your own business, Bud, an' I'll ten' to mine," Mrs. Cullum returned, not unkindly. Which business on her part apparently was to make Mr. Cullum miserable by taking no notice of him whatever. The house under her supervision was, as it had always been, a model of neatness; the meals were cooked by her own hands and served with an especial eye to Tobe's comfort; his clothes were washed and ironed, and his white shirt laid out on Sunday mornings, with the accustomed care and regularity. But with these details Mrs. Cullum's wifely attentions ended. She remained absolutely deaf to any remark addressed to her by her husband, looking through and beyond him when he was present with a steady, unseeing gaze, which was, to say the least, exasperating. All necessary communication with him was carried on by means of the children. "Minty," she would say at the breakfast-table, "ask your pa if he wants another cup of coffee"; or at night, "Temp'unce, tell your pa that Buster has shed a shoe"; or, "Sue, does your

pa know where them well-grabs is?" et cætera, et cætera.

The demoralized household huddled, so to speak, between the opposing camps, frightened and unhappy, and things were altogether in a bad way.

To make matters worse, Miss Minty Cullum, following her mother's example, took high and mighty ground with Jack Carter, dismissing that gentleman with a promptness and coolness which left him wellnigh dumb with amazement.

"Lord, Minty!" he gasped. "Why, I was taken snipe-hunting myself not more'n five years ago. I—"

"I didn't know you were such a fool, Jack Carter," interrupted his sweetheart, with a toss of her pretty head; "that settles it!" and she slammed the door in his face.

Matters were at such a pass finally that Mr. Skaggs, the circuit-rider, when he came to preach, the third Sunday in the month, at Ebenezer Church, deemed it his duty to remonstrate and pray with Sister Cullum at her own house. She listened to his exhortations in grim silence, and knelt without a word when he summoned her to wrestle before the Throne of Grace. "Lord," he concluded, after a long and powerful summing up

of the erring sister's misdeeds, "Thou knowest that she is travelling the broad and flowery road to destruction. Show her the evil of her ways, and warn her to flee from the wrath to come."

He arose from his knees with a look of satisfaction on his face, which changed to one of chagrin when he saw Sister Cullum's chair empty, and Sister Cullum herself out in the backyard tranquilly and silently feeding her hens.

"She shore did flee from the wrath to come, Sissy did," chuckled Granny Carnes, when this episode reached her ears.

As for Tobe, he bore himself in the early days of his affliction in a jaunty debonair fashion, affecting a sprightliness which did not deceive his cronies at Bishop's. In time, however, finding all his attempts at reconciliation with Sissy vain, he became uneasy, and almost as silent as herself, then morose and irritable, and finally black and thunderous.

"He's that wore upon that nobody dassent to go anigh him," said Mrs. Pinson, solemnly. "An' no wonder! Fer of all the conniptions that ever struck the women o' Jim-Ned, *ez wives,* Sissy Cullum's conniptions air the outbeatenes'."

But human endurance has its limits. Mr. Cullum's reached his at the supper-table one night about three weeks after the beginning of his discipline. He had been ploughing all day, and brooding, presumably, over his tribulations, and there was a techy look in his dark eyes as he seated himself at the foot of the well-spread table, presided over by Mrs. Cullum, impassive and dumb as usual. The six girls were ranged on either side.

"Well, ma," began Tobe, with assumed gayety, turning up his plate, "what for a day have you had?"

Sissy looked through and beyond him with fixed, unresponsive gaze, and said never a word.

Then, as Mr. Cullum afterward said, "Ole Satan swep' an' garnish*eed* him an' tuk possession of him." He seized the heavy teacup in front of him and hurled it at his unsuspecting spouse; she gasped, paling slightly, and dodged. The missile, striking the brick chimney-jamb behind her, crashed and fell shivering into fragments on the hearth. The saucer followed. Then, Tobe's spirits rising, plate after plate hurtled across the table; the air fairly bristled with flying crockery. Mrs. Cullum, after the first shock of surprise, continued calmly to eat her

supper, moving her head from right to left or ducking to avoid an unusually well-aimed projectile.

Little Sis scrambled down from her high chair at the first hint of hostilities, and dived, screaming, under the table; the others remained in their places, half paralyzed with terror.

In less time than it takes to tell it, Mr. Cullum, reaching out his long arms, had cleared half the board of its stone and glass ware. Finally he laid a savage hand upon a small, old-fashioned blue pitcher left standing alone in a wide waste of table-cloth.

At this Sissy surrendered unconditionally. "Oh, Tobe, fer Gawd's sake!" she cried, throwing out her hands and quivering from head to foot. "I give in! I give in! *Don't* break the little blue-chiny pitcher! You fetched it to me the day little Bud was born! An' he drunk out'n it jest afore he died! Fer Gawd's sake, Tobe, honey! I give in!"

Tobe set down the pitcher as gingerly as if it had been a soap-bubble. Then, with a whoop which fairly lifted the roof from the cabin, he cleared the intervening space between them and caught his wife in his arms.

Minty, with ready tact, dragged Little

Sis from under the table, and driving the rest of the flock before her, fled the room and shut the door behind her. On the dark porch she ran plump upon Jack Carter.

"Why, Jack!" she cried, with her tear-wet face tucked before she knew it against his breast, "what are you doing here?"

"Oh, just hanging around," grinned Mr. Carter.

"Gawd be praised!" roared Tobe, inside the house.

"Amen!" responded Jack, outside.

"An' Tobe Cullum," announced Joe Trimble at Bishop's the next day, "have ordered up the fines' set o' chiny in Waco fer Sissy."

"It beats *me*," said Newt Pinson; "but I allers did say that the women o' Jim-Ned, *ez wives*, air the outbeatenes' critters in creation!"

# The Courtship of Colonel Bill

BY J. J. EAKINS

IT was early morning in the Blue-grass. The triumphant sun was driving the white mist before it from wood and rolling meadow-land, rousing the drowsy cattle from their tranquil dreams and quickening into fuller life all the inhabitants of that favored region, from the warlike woodpecker with his head of flame high up in the naked tree-top to the timid ground-squirrel flitting along the graystone fences. It glorified with splendid impartiality the apple blossoms in the orchards and the vagabond blackberry bushes blooming by the roadside; and then, with many a mile of smiling pastures in its victorious wake, it burst over the low rampart of stable roofs encircling the old Lexington race-course, and, after a hasty glimpse at the horses speeding around the track and the black boys singing and slouching from stall to stall with buckets of water

on their heads, it rushed impetuously into an old-fashioned, deep-waisted family barouche beside one of the stables, and shone full upon a slender, girlish figure within. It wasted no time upon a purple-faced old gentleman beside her, nor upon two young gentlemen on the seat opposite, but rested with bold and ardent admiration upon the young girl's face, touching her cheeks with a color as delicate as the apple blossoms in the orchards, and weaving into her rich brown hair the red gold of its own beams.

The picture was so dazzling and altogether so unprecedented that Colonel Bill Jarvis, the young owner of the stable, who had come swinging around the corner, whistling a lively tune, his hat thrown back on his head, and who had almost run plump into the carriage, stopped abruptly and stood staring. He was roused to a realizing sense of his position by Major Cicero Johnson, editor of the Lexington *Chronicle* and president of the association, who was standing beside the barouche, saying, with that courtliness of manner and amplitude of rhetoric which made him a fixture in the legislative halls at Frankfort: "Colonel Bill, I want to present you to General Thomas Anderson Braxton, the

hero of two wars, of whom as a Kentuckian you must be proud, and his sons Matt and Jack, and his daughter, Miss Sue, the Flower of the Blue-grass. Ladies and gentlemen," he continued, with an oratorical wave of his hand towards the Colonel, who had bowed gravely to each person in turn to whom he was introduced, "this is my friend Colonel Bill Jarvis, the finest horseman and the most gallant young turfman between the Ohio River and the Gulf of Mexico."

While the Major was speaking, Colonel Bill's eyes wandered from the two young gentlemen on the front seat to the purple-faced old General on the rear seat, and then rested on Miss Braxton. Her eyes met his, and she smiled. It was such a pleasant, gracious, encouraging smile, and there was so much kindliness in the depths of the soft brown eyes, that the Colonel was reassured at once.

"We have come to disturb you at this unearthly hour," said Miss Braxton, apologetically, "because I wanted to see the horses at their work, and father and my brothers were good enough to come with me."

Colonel Bill explained that his horses had finished their morning exercise, but that it would afford him great pleasure

to show them in their stalls. Miss Braxton was sure that they were putting him to a great deal of trouble, and she was also convinced that to see horses in their stalls must be delightful; so presently the party was marching along under the shed, looking at the calm-eyed thoroughbreds in their narrow little homes, the Colonel and Miss Braxton leading the way.

With the wisdom of her sex, Miss Braxton concealed her lack of special knowledge by a generous general enthusiasm which captivated her simple-hearted host.

"And that is really Beau Brummel!" she cried, with sparkling eyes, pointing to a splendid deep-chested animal, who was regarding them with mild curiosity. "And that is Queen of Sheba next to him! What lovely heads they have, and how very proud you must be to own them!" One would have thought her days and nights had been given to a study of these two thoroughbreds.

"They are the best long-distance horses in the country," said the Colonel, flushing with pleasure. And then, in reply to her eager questioning, he gave their pedigrees and performances, all their battles and victories, in detail—a

list as long and as glorious as the triumphs of Napoleon, and perhaps as useful. At each stall she had fresh questions to ask. Her brothers, with an eye to the coming meeting, listened eagerly to the Colonel's answers, while the Major and the General, lagging behind, discussed affairs of state. At last the horses were all seen; everybody shook hands with the Colonel and thanked him, the General with great pompousness, and Miss Braxton with a smile, and a hope that she might see him during the meeting; and the old barouche went lumbering away down the road, until it presently buried itself, like a monstrous cuttlefish, in a cloud of its own making.

Colonel Bill looked after it with a pleased expression on his face, and pulling his tawny mustache reflectively, muttered to himself with true masculine acuteness, "She knew as much about my horses as I did myself."

The great Lexington meeting was in the full tide of its success. Peach-cheeked, bright-eyed Blue-grass girls, and their big-boned, deep-chested admirers, riding and driving in couples and parties, filled all the white, dusty turnpikes leading to the race-course, and made gay the quaint

old Lexington streets. The grand-stand echoed with their merriment, and they cheered home the horses with an enthusiasm seen nowhere else in the world.

The centre of the liveliest of all these merry groups, noticeable for her grace and beauty even there, where so many lovely girls were gathered, was Miss Braxton. She was continuously surrounded by a devoted body-guard of young men, many of whom had ridden miles to catch a glimpse of her bewitching face, and who felt more than recompensed for their efforts by a glance from her bright eyes.

On the first day of the meeting Colonel Bill, arrayed with unusual care, had eagerly scanned the occupants of the grand-stand. His eyes ran heedlessly over scores of pretty faces, until finally they rested upon the group around Miss Braxton. Then carefully buttoning up his coat and straightening out his tall figure, as a brave man might who was about to lead a forlorn hope or receive his opponent's fire, he bore down upon them. Miss Braxton welcomed him cordially, and introduced him to the gentlemen about her. She straightway became so gracious to him that he aroused an amazing amount of suspicion and dislike

in the little circle, to all of which, however, he was happily oblivious. He was a capital mimic, and under the inspiration of her applause he told innumerable negro stories with such lifelike fidelity to nature that even the hostile circle was convulsed, and Miss Braxton laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks.

Time sped so swiftly that the last race was run before the Colonel was aware that the programme was half over, and he found himself saying good-bye to Miss Braxton, and wishing with all his heart he were one of the half-dozen lucky young men who were waiting on their horses outside to escort her carriage back to Lexington.

It was that same evening old Elias, Colonel Bill's body-servant and general assistant, noticed a most surprising development in his young employer. One of the Colonel's most prized possessions was a fiddle. It had never been known, in all the years he owned it, to utter aught except the most joyful sounds. Whenever he picked it up, as he frequently did on winter nights, when everybody gathered around the big wood fire in his room, the stable-boys at once made ready to beat time to "Money Musk," "Old Dan Tucker," and other cheerful airs.

On this particular night the Colonel seized the fiddle and strode gloomily to the end of the stable. Presently there came forth upon the night air such melancholy and dismal notes as made every stable-boy, from little Pete to big Mose, shiver. As the lugubrious sounds continued, the boys fled to their loft, leaving Elias, who had watched over the Colonel from his infancy, to keep vigil, with a troubled look on his withered face. Many nights thereafter was this singular proceeding repeated, to the ever-increasing wonderment of Elias.

Every day during the meeting when Miss Braxton was at the track Colonel Bill sought her out. Sometimes he had a chance for a long talk, but oftener he was forced to content himself with shorter interviews. More than once he noticed General Braxton join his daughter when he approached, and he found that old warrior's manner growing more and more cold.

"He's a loser," thought the Colonel, to whom it never for a moment occurred that his own presence might be disagreeable to any one. "A man oughtn't to bet when he can't stand a-losing," he concluded, philosophically, and then he dismissed the matter from his mind.

On the last day of the races, after waiting for an hour or more to speak alone to Miss Braxton, and finding her constantly guarded by her father, who looked fiercer than usual, Colonel Bill was finally compelled to join her as she and the General were leaving the grandstand. She saw him coming, and stopped, a pleased look on her face. The General, with a frigid nod, moved on a few paces and left them together.

"I have come to ask if I might call on you this evening, Miss Braxton," said the Colonel, timidly, "if you have no other engagement."

"I shall be very glad indeed to have you call," she replied, cordially, adding, with a smile, "You know, Lexington is not so wildly gay that we haven't ample time to see our friends."

As he walked away the Colonel thought he heard his name mentioned by General Braxton, and although the words were inaudible, the tone was sharp and commanding. He turned and glanced back. The girl's face was flushed, and she looked excited, something unusual to her self-contained, reposeful manner. As they moved out of hearing, the General was still talking with great earnestness, and a feeling of uneasiness began to op-

press him. This feeling had not altogether departed when he galloped into Lexington that night, his long-tailed, white linen duster buttoned up to his chin, the brim of his soft black hat pulled down over his eyes.

The Elms, a roomy old-fashioned house encircled by wide verandas, the home of the Braxtons for generations, was one of the landmarks of Lexington. A long stretch of lawn filled with shrubbery and clumps of trees protected its inmates from the city's dust and turmoil and almost concealed the house itself from view. The Colonel, to whom the Elms was perfectly well known, never drew rein till he was before it, and then, checking his horse so suddenly that a less intelligent animal would have turned a somersault, swung himself out of the saddle with the ease of one who had spent the greater part of his life there, fastened the bridle to a ring in a great oak-tree by the curbing, and opening the big iron gate, strode up the gravelled walk which wound through the shrubbery.

Miss Braxton had been sitting at the piano in the drawing-room playing softly. The long windows looking out on the veranda were opened to admit the

balmy air, and before her visitor arrived she heard his approaching footsteps.

"I am very glad you have come," she said, walking out to meet him; "I was afraid that in the excitement of the race-track you might have forgotten our engagement. I felt a little depressed this evening, and that is another reason why I am glad to see you." She led the way back into the drawing-room as she talked, and invited the Colonel to sit beside her on one of the sofas. In the soft glow of the dimly lighted lamps he thought she had never appeared so beautiful; and the rich fragrance of the dew-laden roses and honeysuckle wafted in through the open windows seemed to him to be an atmosphere peculiar to her alone, like the exceeding sweetness of her soft, low voice and the easy grace of her movements.

In reply to her questions he told her of his adventures on far Southern tracks, and of the careless, reckless life he had led. He had seen many strange and stirring sights during his wanderings; and to her, whose young life had hitherto flown along as peacefully as a meadow-brook, it seemed like a new and thrilling romance, with a living being in place of

the printed page. Once he mentioned a woman's name, and she started.

"In all that time," she inquired, softly, her eyes lowered, "did no woman ever come into your life?"

"No," he answered, simply; "I never thought of a woman then."

She raised her eyes to his, and lowered them instantly, her face flushing.

During a moment's lull in the conversation the hour was struck from a neighboring steeple. They both started, half-guiltily. It was midnight. He at once arose to go, apologizing for the lateness of his visit.

"I would like to see you again, Miss Braxton, before I go North," he said, as he prepared to leave.

She had risen with him, and they were both standing beside the mantel. Her face paled. Then she turned her head aside, and said, in a tone that was almost inaudible, "Father objects."

He became rigid instantly, and his lips grew white. "I suppose your father don't know who I am," he said, proudly. "My family is as good as any in the State. I loved horses and the life and color of the race-track, and refused to go to college when I could. Until I met you I never thought of anything except

horses. But the pedigree of my people is straight. There isn't a cold cross on either side. I know I amount to nothing myself," he continued, bitterly, his eyes resting gloomily on the floor; "I'm only a no-account old selling-plater, and I'll just go back to the stable, where I belong." Here an unusual sound interrupted him, and he looked up. The girl, with her head on her arm, was leaning against the mantel, sobbing quietly. In a moment he forgot all about himself and snatched up her disengaged hand.

"Do you really care?" he cried, pressing the fluttering little hand in both of his.

She lifted up her face, the soft brown eyes swimming in tears. "I wouldn't mind," she replied, half laughing and half sobbing—"I wouldn't mind at all about the pedigree, and I know you're not an old selling-plater; but if you were, I am very sure that I would care for you."

The Lexington meeting was over, and the horsemen were scattered far and wide, from Chicago to Sheepshead Bay. Colonel Bill alone remained behind. As the days passed and he made no preparation to depart, old Elias's irritation grew

apace, and the lives of the stable-boys under the increasing rigor of his rule became almost unendurable. The Colonel, however, saw very little of Elias or the stable-boys. Even his beloved horses no longer interested him. He passed the days walking the streets of Lexington, hoping by some chance to meet Miss Braxton, and it was not until late at night that he returned to the race-track, foot-sore and disappointed. He had been too deeply wounded and was too proud to make any further effort to visit the Elms, and he thought it would be unmanly and ungenerous to ask Miss Braxton to meet him away from her father's house.

In the mean time the old General's wrath increased as the days passed. He was unused to any kind of opposition, and the Colonel's persistence irritated him beyond measure. The dream of his life was a brilliant marriage for his daughter, and no amount of argument could alter his opinion that Colonel Bill was a rude, unlettered stable-man.

"Why, sir," he would exclaim, over a mint-julep, to his friend Major Johnson, who always defended the Colonel vigorously, "the idea of such attentions to my daughter is preposterous—ludicrous!

I will not permit it, sir—not for one moment. If he persists in annoying my family, sir," and the purple hue of the General's face deepened, "I would no more hesitate to shoot him—no more, by gad!—than I would a rattlesnake." After the fourth or fifth julep he did not always confine his conversation to his friend, and so his threats often found their way back to the object of his wrath, losing nothing by the journey. Although the Colonel's disposition was the sunniest, the strain to which he was being subjected was telling on his nerves, and once or twice he replied sharply to the tale-bearers. The little city was soon excited over the quarrel, and every movement of the principals was eagerly noted.

"My money goes on Bill," said Jule Chinn, the proprietor of the Blue-grass Club, when the matter came up for discussion there between deals. "I saw him plug that creole down in Orleans. First he throws him down the steps of the St. Charles for insultin' a lady. When Frenchy insists on a duel an' Bill gets up in front of him, he says, in that free-an'-easy way of his, 'We mark puppies up in my country by cutting their ears, and that's what I'm going to do to you, for you ain't fit to die,' an' blame

me if he don't just pop bullets through that fellow's ears like you'd punch holes in a piece of cheese!" After that the Colonel ruled a strong favorite in the betting.

When this condition of affairs had existed for two weeks, the Colonel arose one morning from a sleepless bed with a fixed idea in his mind. He sat down to a table in his room, pulled out some writing-paper, and set to work. After many sheets had been covered and destroyed, he finally decided upon the following:

"DEAR MISS BRAXTON,—I am going away from Lexington to-morrow, probably never to return. Will you be at your father's gate at three o'clock this afternoon, as I would like to say goodbye to you before I go?

"Your sincere friend,

"WILLIAM JARVIS."

After he had finished this epistle it seemed to him entirely too cold; but the others, which he had written in a more sentimental vein, had appeared unduly presumptuous. He finally sealed it and gave it to Pete, with terrific threats of personal violence in case of anything preventing its prompt delivery. While

Pete was galloping off to Lexington at breakneck speed, the Colonel was wondering what the answer would be.

"I'll just say good-bye to her," he muttered, moodily, "and then I'll never see her again. I suppose I belong with the horses, anyhow, and that old bottle-nosed General has me classed all right!"

When Pete returned he handed the Colonel a dainty little three-cornered note. It was addressed to "My dear friend," and the writer was *so sorry* he was going away so *very soon,* and had hoped he would stay *ever* so much longer, and then signed herself cordially his, Susan Burleigh Braxton. At the bottom was a postscript—"I will expect you at three o'clock."

An hour before the appointed time the Colonel was striding impatiently up and down before the Elms, incessantly consulting his watch or wistfully gazing up the gravelled walk. It still lacked several minutes of three, when his heart gave a great jump as he saw Miss Braxton's graceful figure flitting in and out through the shrubbery. She stopped to pluck some roses from a bush that hung over the walk, bending down the richly laden bough so that the flowers made a complete circle about her bright young

face, and as she raised her eyes she caught the Colonel gazing at her with such a look of abject idolatry that she laughed and blushed. "You see I am on time," she cried, gayly, hastening down to the gate and handing him one of her roses. "I am going to the post-office, and you may walk with me if you care to." If he cared to! Her mere presence beside him, the feeling that he could reach out his hand and touch her, the music of her voice, filled him with a joy of which he had never before dreamed.

After they had left the post-office, by mutual direction their footsteps turned from the more crowded thoroughfares, and they walked down a quiet and deserted street where the stones were covered with moss, and where solemn gnarled old trees lined the way on either side and met above their heads, the fresh green leaves murmuring softly together like living things.

They reached the end of the old street, and were almost in the country. A wide-spreading chestnut-tree stood before them, around whose giant bole a rustic seat had been built. They walked towards it in silence and sat down side by side.

They were entirely alone. A gay young red-bird, his head knowingly cocked on

one side, perched in the branches just above them. A belated bumblebee, already heavy laden, hung over a cluster of wild flowers at their feet. A long-legged garrulous grasshopper, undismayed by their presence, uttered his clarion notes on the seat beside them.

The inquisitive young red-bird looking down could only see a soft black hat and a white straw hat with flowers about its broad brim. He heard the black hat wondering if any one ever thought of him, to which the straw hat replied softly that it was sure some one did think of him very often. Then the black hat wondered if some one, when it was away, would continue to think of it, and the flowered straw, still more softly, was very, very sure some one would.

Then the red-bird saw such a remarkable thing happen that his bright eyes almost popped out of his little head. He saw a hand and a powerful arm suddenly steal out from below the black hat and move in the direction of the flowered straw—not hurriedly, but stealthily and surely. Having reached it, the hand and the arm drew the unresisting flowered straw in the direction of the black hat, until presently the hats came together. And then the red-bird, himself desperate-

ly in love, knew what it all meant, and burst into jubilant song. And the hard-working bumblebee, who also had a sweetheart, took a moment's rest in honor of the event and buzzed his delight; and even the long-legged grasshopper, an admirer of the sex, but a confirmed bachelor, shouted his approbation until he was fairly hoarse.

It was some time before the adventurous hand could be put back where it properly belonged, and the face beneath the straw, when it came into view, was a very flushed face, but the brown eyes shone like stars. As they walked through the old street, the setting sun filling the air with a golden glory, they passed a sweet-faced old lady cutting flowers in her garden, and she smiled an indulgent smile, and they nodded and smiled back at her.

"I want you to promise me something," Miss Braxton said, suddenly stopping and looking up at him. "I want you to promise me," she continued, not waiting for his reply, "that you will not quarrel with my father. He is the best father in the world. My mother died when I was a child, and since then he has been father and mother and the whole world to me. I could never for-

give myself if you exchanged a harsh word with him."

"If all the stories I hear are true," replied the Colonel, with a good-humored laugh, "your father is the one for you to see."

"My father says a great deal which he frequently regrets the moment afterwards," she responded, earnestly. "He is a warm-hearted and an impulsive man, and the dearest and best father in the world." The Colonel gave the desired promise, and they walked on in silence. When they reached the Elms, and her hand was on the big iron gate, she turned to him, an appealing look in her eyes. "Must you really go to-morrow?" she asked.

"I am compelled to go," he replied, sadly. "I have already remained here too long. I must start to-morrow night."

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am that you are going away," she said, softly, extending her hand. He caught it up passionately.

"I must see you again!" he cried. "I can't go away until I do. It is hard enough to leave even then. I won't ask you to come away from your father's house to meet me, but you could be here, couldn't you?"

"When shall I come?" she asked, simply.

"The train leaves to-morrow night at twelve. Could you be here at eleven?"

"I will be here at eleven," she said; and then, with a brave attempt to smile, she turned away. Just at that moment General Braxton rounded the neighboring corner and came straight towards them.

In the hotel across the way the loungers leaning back in their cane-bottomed chairs straightened up with keenest interest and delight. Jule Chinn in the Blue-grass Club up-stairs, happening to glance out of the window, turned his box over, and remarked that if any gentleman cared to bet, he would lay any part of $5000 on Bill. When the General was directly opposite him Colonel Bill gravely and courteously lifted his hat. For an instant the old man hesitated, and then, with a glance at his daughter, he lifted his own hat and passed through the gate.

"Well, I'll be ——!" cried Jule, with a whistle of infinite amazement. "Things is changed in Kentucky!"

"That," said Major Cicero Johnson, who had exchanged several hundred subscriptions to his paper for an ever-de-

creasing pile of Jule's blue chips—"that is the tribute which valor pays to beauty. Their pleasure has only been postponed. Colonel Chinn, you have overlooked that small wager on the ace. Thanks."

Ten minutes later Colonel Bill was galloping out to the race-track, gayly singing a popular love-song. Suddenly something occurred to him and he stopped, reached back into his hip-pocket, and drew out a long pistol. He threw it as far as he could into a neighboring brier-patch, and once more giving rein to his horse, began to sing with renewed enthusiasm.

When he reached the track he called old Elias into his room, and they remained together for a long time in whispered conference. That night any one who happened to have been belated on the Versailles 'pike might have passed Elias jogging along on his horse, looking very important, and an air of mystery enveloping him like a garment.

It was far into the night when he returned. As he started to creep up the ladder to the loft above his young master's room, his shoes in his hand so as not to awaken him, the Colonel, who had been tossing on a sleepless bed for hours, called out. Elias, who evidently regard-

ed himself as a conspirator, waited until he had reached the loft, and then whispered back, "Hit's all right, Marse Bill," and was instantly swallowed up in the darkness.

It was one of those perfect June nights so often seen in Kentucky. The full moon hung in a cloudless sky, filling the air with a soft white radiance. There was not a movement in the still, warm atmosphere, and to Colonel Bill, waiting beneath the shadows of the big oak-tree near the General's gate, it seemed that all nature was waiting with him. The leaves above his head, the gray old church steeple beyond the house, the long stretch of deserted streets—they all wore a hushed, expectant look.

It was several minutes past the appointed hour, and Miss Braxton had not come. He had begun to fear that perhaps her father, suspecting something, had detained her, when he saw her figure, a white outline among the rose-bushes, far up the walk. As she drew near he stepped out from the shadows, and she gave a little cry of delight.

"I know I am late, but I was talking with father," she said, apologetically, and the brown eyes became troubled. "He

was very restless and nervous to-night, and when he is in that condition he says I soothe him." They had slowly walked towards the tree as she was speaking, and when she had finished they were completely hidden from any chance passer. She glanced up, and even in the gloom she noticed how white and tense was his face.

"Do you know," he cried, abruptly, "if I go away from Lexington to-night it will only be to return in a day, or two days? For weeks I have been able to think of nothing, to dream of nothing, except you. I haven't come here to-night to say good-bye to you," he continued, passionately, "because I cannot say good-bye to you, but to implore you to come with me—to marry me—to-night —now." She shrank back. "I have made all my arrangements," he continued, feverishly. "I have a cousin, a minister, living in Versailles. Once a month he preaches in a little church on the 'pike near there. I sent word by Elias last night for him to meet us there to-night, and he said he would. Elias has the horses under the trees yonder; they will be here in a moment, and in an hour we will be married. Come!" His arms were around her, and while he

spoke she was carried away by the rush of his passion, and yielded to it with a feeling of languorous delight. Then there came the thought of the lonely old man who would be left behind. She slipped gently from her lover's arms and looked back at the house which had been her home for so many years. She saw the light in her father's room, and recalled how she went there when she was a little girl to say her prayers at his knee and kiss him good-night. He had always been so kind to her, so willing to sacrifice himself for her pleasure, and he was so old. What would he do when she had gone out of his life? No; she could not desert him. She covered her face with her hands. "I cannot leave father," she sobbed. "I cannot; I must not." They had moved out from the shadow of the tree into the moonlight. He had taken her hand, and had begun to renew his appeals, when they were both startled by the sound of footsteps on the gravelled walk and the General's voice crying, "Sue! Sue, where are you?" At the same moment Elias came up, leading two horses. The Colonel and Miss Braxton stood just as they were, too surprised to move. They could not escape in any event, for almost as soon

as the words reached them the General came into view. He saw them at once, and it required only a glance at the approaching horses to tell him everything. With an inarticulate cry of rage, his gray hair streaming behind him, he rushed wildly back to the house. The Colonel looked after him, and then turned to Miss Braxton.

"He has gone to arm himself," he said, quietly. "He will be back with your brothers."

The girl looked up in his face and shivered. Then she glanced towards the house, where lights were flashing from room to room, and the doors were being opened and shut, and she wrung her hands. In the stillness every sound could be heard—the rush of footsteps down the stairs, the fierce commands, the creaking of the great stable door in the rear of the house.

"They are getting out the horses," she whispered.

"Yes," he replied, calmly. "He thought we were running away." There was not a tremor in his voice. She was reared in a society where physical bravery is the first of virtues, and even in that terrible moment she could not help feeling a thrill of pride as she looked at him.

She never thought of asking him to fly. She could hear the horses as they were led out of their stalls one by one, their hoofs echoing sharply on the stone flagging. Her excited imagination supplied all the details. Now they were putting on the bridles; now they were fastening the saddles; they were mounted; the gate was being opened; in another moment they would sweep down on them. Then she looked at her lover standing there so motionless, waiting—for what? The thought of it was maddening.

"Quick! quick!" she cried, wildly, catching his arm; "I will go with you."

Without a word he lifted her up in his arms and seated her on one of the horses. He carefully tested the saddle, although the hoofs of their pursuers' horses were already ringing on the street behind the house. Then he swung himself easily into the saddle, and was hardly there before the General and his two sons swept around the neighboring corner, not fifty yards away.

"Good-bye, Elias," called the Colonel, cheerfully, as they shot out into the moonlit street; and Elias's "God bless you bofe, Marse Bill!" came to them above the rush of the horses.

As they went clattering through the

quiet streets and past the rows of darkened houses, the horses, with their sinewy necks straightened out speeding so swiftly that the balmy air blew a soft wind in their riders' faces, Colonel Bill, with a slight shade of disappointment in his voice, said:

"I guess you didn't get a good look at the horses, or you would have recognized them. That's old Beau Brummel you're on, and this is Queen of Sheba. They're both fit, although they haven't been particularly trained for these free-for-all scrambles, owners' handicap, ten miles straightaway. But I don't believe there's a horse in Kentucky can catch us to-night," he concluded, proudly patting the neck of his thoroughbred. He glanced over his shoulder as he spoke, and noted that the distance between them and their pursuers was constantly widening, until, turning a corner, they could neither see nor hear them.

And now the Colonel's spirits fairly bubbled over. He was a superb rider, and swinging carelessly in his saddle, his hands hardly touching the reins, he kept up a running stream of jocular comment.

"It looks to me like the old gentleman's going to be distanced," he cried,

with a chuckle. "He can't say a word, though, for he made the conditions of this race. The start was a trifle straggling, as Jack Calloway told me once when he left seven horses at the post in a field of ten, and perhaps the Beau and the Queen didn't have the worst of it."

In every possible way he sought to divert his companion's mind. Once or twice she delighted him by faintly smiling a response to his speeches. They had passed the last of the straggling houses, and the turnpike stretched before them, a white ribbon winding through the green meadow-land. They had to wait while a sleepy toll-gate-keeper lifted his wooden bar, and straining their ears, they could just catch the faint, far-away sound of galloping horses.

"In another hour," he cried, pressing her hand, and once more they were off. A mile farther on they stopped again. Before them was a narrow lane debauching from the turnpike.

"That lane," he said, reflectively, "would save us a good two miles, for the 'pike makes a big bend here. Elias told me that he heard it was closed up, and we might get in there and not be able to get out. We can't afford to take the chance," he concluded, thoughtfully,

and they continued on their journey. For some time neither spoke. As they were about to enter the wood through which the road passed they stopped to breathe their horses.

"I don't hear them," said the girl. Then she added, joyfully, "Perhaps they have turned back."

He listened attentively. "Perhaps they have," he said, at last.

As they rode forward more than once an anxious expression passed over his face, although his conversation was as cheerful as ever. Miss Braxton, from whose mind a great weight had been lifted, laughed and chatted as she had not done since the journey began.

They had passed through the wood and were out in the open country again. As they galloped on, only the distant barking of a watch-dog guarding some lonely farm-house, or the premature crowing of a barn fowl, deceived by the brilliancy of the moonlight into thinking that day had come, broke the absolute silence. They might have been the one woman and the one man in a new world, so profound was their isolation.

"Do you see that group of trees on the hill there just ahead of us," he asked, carelessly, as the horses slowed to a can-

ter. "Well, just the other side of those trees the lane we passed joins the 'pike again. Now it is possible that instead of your amiable relatives going home, they may have taken to the lane. If it hasn't been closed, they may be waiting there to welcome us." For a moment the girl was deceived by the lightness of his manner; and then, as she realized what such a situation meant, she grew white to the lips. "The chances are," he continued, cheerfully, "that they won't be there, but we had just as well be prepared. If they are there we must approach them just as if we were going to talk to them, slowing up almost to a walk. They will be on my side, and I will keep in the middle of the 'pike. You remain as close to the fence as you can. When we get opposite them I'll yell, 'Now!' You can give your horse his head, and before they know what's happened we will be a hundred yards away. All my horses have been trained to get away from the post, and these two are the quickest breakers on the Western Circuit. Now let's go over the plan again." And the Colonel carefully repeated what he had said, illustrating it as he went along. Yes, she understood him. It was very simple. How could she forget it? As she told

him this her frightened eyes never left his face, and she followed his movements with such a look of pain that he swore at her father, under his breath, with a vigor which did full justice to the occasion.

A few minutes' ride brought them to the top of the hill, and they both looked eagerly before them. A furlong away, standing perfectly still in the middle of the lane, their horses' heads facing the turnpike, were three mounted men. It required no second glance to identify the watchers. Colonel Bill's eyes blazed, and his right hand went back instinctively to his empty pistol-pocket. He regained his composure in a moment. "Go very slow," he whispered, "and don't make a move till I shout. Keep as far over to your side as you can." They approached the three grim watchers, their horses' almost eased to a walk. Not a word was spoken on either side. When they had reached a point almost directly opposite their pursuers, Colonel Bill made a pretence of pulling up his horse, only to catch the reins in a firmer grip, and then, with a sudden dig of the spurs, he yelled, "Now!" and his horse sprang forward like a frightened deer. At the same instant Miss Braxton deliberately swung

her horse across the road and behind his. Then there came the sharp report of a pistol, followed by the rush of the pursuing horses. But high above all other sounds rose General Braxton's agonized voice: "My God, don't shoot! Don't shoot!" Before the Colonel could turn in his saddle Miss Braxton was beside him.

"Why didn't you stay where you were?" he cried, sharply, the sense of her peril setting his nerves on edge. As he realized that it was for his sake she had come between him and danger, his eyes grew moist. "Suppose you had been hurt?" he added, reproachfully. She did not reply, and they rode on at full speed. They had once more left their pursuers behind; but as the church was now only a few miles away, and they needed every spare moment there, they urged their horses to renewed effort.

"There is the church now, and it's lighted up," cried the Colonel, joyfully, as they dashed around a bend in the road, pointing to a little one-story building tucked away amid trees and underbrush beside the turnpike. In the doorway the minister stood waiting for them —a tall young man whose ruddy face, broad shoulders, and humorous blue eyes

suggested the relationship the Colonel had mentioned. As they pulled up, the young minister came forward and was introduced by the Colonel as "My cousin, Jim Bradley." While they were both assisting Miss Braxton to dismount and fastening the horses, the Colonel, in a few words, told of the pursuit and of the necessity of haste. Mr. Bradley led the way into the church, the lovers following arm in arm. It was a plain whitewashed little room, with wooden benches for the worshippers, and a narrow aisle leading up to the platform, where stood the preacher's pulpit. Half a dozen lamps with bright tin reflectors behind them, like halos, were fastened to brackets high up on the walls. The young couple stopped when they reached the platform, and at Mr. Bradley's request joined their hands. He had opened the prayer-book at the marriage service, and was beginning to read it, when he gave a start. Far away down the turnpike, faint but unmistakable — now dying away into a mere murmur, now rising clear and bold—came the sound of galloping horses. The Colonel felt the girl's hand cold in his, and he whispered a word of encouragement. Mr. Bradley hurried on with the ceremony. The cen-

turies-old questions, so often asked beneath splendid domes before fashionable assemblages to the accompaniment of triumphant music, were never answered with more truth and fervor than in that little roadside church, with no one to hear them but the listening trees and the heart of the night wind.

"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

How he pressed the trembling little hand in his, and how devotedly he answered, "I will."

"Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband? Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?"

The downcast eyes were covered with the drooping lids, and the voice was faint and low, but what a world of love was in the simple, "I will."

As the young minister, very solemn and dignified now, paused for each reply, there came ever nearer and ever louder the ringing of the hoof-beats. Once he

stole a hurried glance through the window which gave on the turnpike. Not half a mile away, their figures black against the sky-line, fiercely lashing their tired horses to fresh effort, were three desperate riders. The couple before him did not raise their eyes.

And now the concluding words of the service had been reached, and the minister had begun, "Those whom God hath joined together—" when the rest of the sentence was lost in the old General's angry shout, as he flung himself from his horse, and, with his sons at his heels, rushed into the church. At the threshold they stopped with blanched faces, for, as they entered, the girl, uttering a faint cry, her face whiter than her gown, down which a little stream of blood was trickling, reeled and tottered, and fell senseless into her husband's arms.

A few days later Major Johnson's Lexington *Chronicle,* under the heading "Jarvis — Braxton," contained the following:

"Colonel William Jarvis, the distinguished and genial young turfman, and Miss Susan Braxton, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of General Thomas Anderson Braxton, the hero of two

wars, whose name is a household word wherever valor is honored and eloquence is admired, were united in marriage Monday night. With the romance of youth, the young couple determined to avoid the conventionalities of society, and only the bride's father and two brothers were present. Immediately preceding the ceremony the lovely bride was accidentally injured by the premature explosion of a fire-arm, but her hosts of friends will be delighted to learn that the mishap was not of a serious character. The young couple are now the guests of General Braxton at the historic Elms. We are informed, however, that Colonel Jarvis contemplates retiring from the turf and purchasing a stock-farm near Lexington. As a souvenir of his marriage he has promised his distinguished father-in-law the first three good horses he raises."

# The Balance of Power

BY MAURICE THOMPSON

"I DON'T hesitate to say to you that I regard him as but a small remove in nature from absolute trash, Phyllis—absolute trash! His character may be good—doubtless it is; but he is not of good family, and he shows it. What is he but a mountain cracker? There is no middle ground; trash is trash!"

Colonel Mobley Sommerton spoke in a rich bass voice, slowly rolling his words. The bagging of his trousers at the knees made his straight legs appear bent, as if for a jump at something, while his daughter Phyllis looked at him searchingly, but not in the least impatiently, her fine gray eyes wide open, and her face, with its delicately blooming cheeks, its peach-petal lips, and its saucy little nose, all attention and half-indignant surprise.

"Of course," the Colonel went on,

with a conciliatory touch in his words, when he had waited some time for his daughter to speak and she spoke not—"of course you do not care a straw for him, Phyllis; I know that. The daughter of a Sommerton couldn't care for such a—"

"I don't mind saying to you that I do care for him, and that I love him, and want to marry him," broke in Phyllis, with tremulous vehemence, tears gushing from her eyes at the same time; and a depth of touching pathos seemed to open behind her words, albeit they rang like so many notes of rank boldness in the old man's ears.

"Phyllis!" he exclaimed; then he stooped a little, his trousers bagging still more, and he stood in an attitude almost stagy, a flare of choleric surprise leaping into his face. "Phyllis Sommerton, what *do* you mean? Are you crazy? You say that to me?"

The girl—she was just eighteen—faced her father with a look at once tearfully saucy and lovingly firm. The sauciness, however, was superficial and physical, not in any degree a part of her mental mood. She could not, had she tried, have been the least bit wilful or impertinent with her father, who had always been a

model of tenderness. Besides, a girl never lived who loved a parent more unreservedly than Phyllis loved Colonel Sommerton.

"Go to your room, miss! go to your room! Step lively at that, and let me have no more of this nonsense. Go! I command you!"

The stamp with which the Colonel's rather substantial boot just then shook the floor seemed to generate some current of force sufficient to whirl Phyllis about and send her up-stairs in an old-fashioned fit of hysteria. She was crying and talking and running all at the same time, her voice made liquid like a bird's, and yet jangling with its mixed emotions. Down fell her wavy, long, brown hair almost to her feet, one rich strand trailing over the rail as she mounted the steps, while the rustling of her muslin dress told off the springy motion of her limbs till she disappeared in the gilt-papered gloom aloft, where the windowless hall turned at right angles with the stairway.

Colonel Sommerton was smiling grimly by this time, and his iron-gray mustache quivered humorously.

"She's a little brick," he muttered; "a chip off the old log—by zounds, she is!

She means business. Got the bit in her teeth, and fairly splitting the air!" He chuckled raucously. "Let her go; she'll soon tire out."

Sommerton Place, a picturesque old mansion, as mansions have always gone in north Georgia, stood in a grove of oaks on a hill-top overlooking a little mountain town, beyond which uprose a crescent of blue peaks against a dreamy summer sky. Behind the house a broad plantation rolled its billow-like ridges of corn and cotton.

The Colonel went out on the veranda and lit a cigar, after breaking two or three matches that he nervously scratched on a column.

This was the first quarrel that he had ever had with Phyllis.

Mrs. Sommerton had died when Phyllis was twelve years old, leaving the little girl to be brought up in a boarding-school in Atlanta. The widowed man did not marry again, and when his daughter came home, six months before the opening of our story, it was natural that he should see nothing but loveliness in the fair, bright, only child of his happy wedded life, now ended forever.

The reader must have taken for granted that the person under discussion in

the conversation touched upon at the outset of this writing was a young man; but Tom Bannister stood for more than the sum of the average young man's values. He was what in our republic is recognized as a promising fellow, bright, magnetic, shifty, well forward in the neologies of society, business, and politics, a born leader in a small way, and as ambitious as poverty and a brimming self-esteem could make him. From his humble law-office window he had seen Phyllis pass along the street in the old Sommerton carriage, and had fallen in love as promptly as possible with her plump, lissome form and pretty face.

He sought her acquaintance, avoided with cleverness a number of annoying barriers, assaulted her heart, and won it, all of which stood as mere play when compared with climbing over the pride and prejudice of Colonel Sommerton. For Bannister was nobody in a social way, as viewed from the lofty top of the hill at Sommerton Place; indeed, all of his kinspeople were mountaineers, honest, it is true, but decidedly woodsy, who tilled stony acres in a pocket beyond the first blue ridge yonder. His education seemed good, but it had been snatched from the books by force, with the sav-

age certainty of grip which belongs to genius.

Colonel Sommerton, having unbounded confidence in Phyllis's aristocratic breeding, would not open his eyes to the attitude of the young people until suddenly it came into his head that possibly the almost briefless plebeian lawyer had ulterior designs while climbing the hill, as he was doing noticeably often, from town to Sommerton Place. But when this thought arrived the Colonel was prompt to act. He called up the subject at once, and we have seen the close of his interview with Phyllis.

Now he stood on the veranda and puffed his cigar with quick, short draughts, as a man does who falters between two horns of a dilemma. He turned his head to one side as if listening to his own thoughts, his tall, pointed collar meantime fitting snugly in a crease of his furrowed jaw.

At this moment the shambling, yet in a way facile, footsteps of Barnaby, the sporadic freedman of the household, were soothing. Colonel Sommerton turned his eyes on the comer inquiringly, almost eagerly.

"Well, Barn, you're back," he said.

"Yah, sah; I'se had er confab wid

'em," remarked the negro, seating himself on the top step of the veranda, and mopping his coal-black face with a red cotton handkerchief; "an' hit do beat all. Niggahs is mos'ly eejits, spacially w'en yo' wants 'em to hab some sense."

He was a huge, ill-shapen, muscular fellow, old but still vigorous, and in his small black eyes twinkled an unsounded depth of shrewdness. He had been the Colonel's slave from his young manhood to the close of the war; since then he had hung around Ellijay what time he was not sponging a livelihood from Sommerton Place under color of doing various light turns in the vegetable garden, and of attending to his quondam master's horses.

Barnaby was a great banjoist, a charming song-singer, and a leader of the negroes around about. Lately he was gaining some reputation as a political boss.

There was but one political party in the county (for the colored people were so few that they could not be called a party), and the only struggle for office came in the pursuit of a nomination, which was always equivalent to election. Candidates were chosen at a convention or mass-meeting of the whites and the

only figure that the blacks were able to cut in the matter was by reason of a pretended, rather than a real, prejudice against them which was used by the candidates (who are always white men) to further their electioneering schemes, as will presently appear.

"Hit do beat all," Barnaby repeated, shaking his heavy head reflectively, and making a grimace both comical and hideous. "Dat young man desput sma't and cunnin', sho's yo' bo'n he is. He done been foolin' wid dem niggahs a'ready."

The reader may as well be told at once that if a candidate could by any means make the negroes support his opponent for the nomination it was the best card he could possibly play; or, if he could not quite do this, but make it appear that the other fellow was not unpopular in colored circles, it served nearly the same turn.

Phyllis, when she ran crying up-stairs after the conversation with her father, went to her room, and fell into a chair by the window. So it chanced that she overheard the conference between Colonel Sommerton and Barnaby, and long after it was ended she still sat there leaning on the window-sill. Her eyes

showed a trifle of irritation, but the tears were all gone.

"Why didn't Tom tell me that he was going to run against my father?" she inquired of herself over and over. "I think he might have trusted me, so I do. It's mean of him. And if he should beat papa! Papa could bear that."

She sprang to her feet and walked across the room, stopping on the way to rub her apple-bloom cheeks before a looking-glass. Vaguely enough, but insistently, the outline of a political plot glimmered in her consciousness and troubled her understanding. Plainly her father and Tom Bannister were rival candidates, and just as plainly each was scheming to make it appear that the negroes were supporting his opponent; but the girl's little head could not gather up and comprehend all that such a condition of things meant. She supposed that a sort of disgrace would attach to defeat, and she clasped her hands and poised her winsome body melodramatically when she asked herself which she would rather the defeat would fall upon, her father or Tom. She leaned out of the window and saw Colonel Sommerton walking down the road towards town, with his cigar elevated at an acute angle

with his nose, his hat pulled well down in front, by which she knew that he was still excited. Days went by, as days will in any state of affairs, with just such faultless weather as August engenders amid the cool hills of the old Cherokee country; and Phyllis noted, by an indirect attention to what she had never before been interested in, that Colonel Sommerton was growing strangely confidential and familiar with Barnaby. She had a distinct but remote impression that her father had hitherto never, at least never openly, shown such irenic solicitude in that direction, and she knew that his sudden peace-making with the old negro meant ill to her lover. She pondered the matter with such discrimination and logic as her clever little brain could compass; and at last she one evening called Barnaby to come into the garden with his banjo.

The sun was down, and the half-grown moon swung yellow and clear against the violet arch of mid-heaven. Through the sheen a softened outline of the town wavered fantastically.

Phyllis sat on a great fragment of limestone, which, embossed with curious fossils, formed the immovable centrepiece of the garden.

Barnaby, at a respectful distance, crumpled herself satyr-like on the ground, with his banjo across his knee, and gazed expectantly aslant at the girl's sweet face.

"Now play me my father's favorite song," she said.

They heard Mrs. Wren, the housekeeper, opening the windows in the upper rooms of the mansion to let in the night air, which was stirring over the valley with a delicious mountain chill on its wings. All around in the trees and shrubbery the katydids were rasping away in immelodious statement and denial of the ancient accusation.

Barnaby demurred. He did not imagine, so at least he said, that Miss Phyllis would be pleased with the ballad that recently had been the Colonel's chief musical delight; but he must obey the young lady, and so, after some throat-clearing and string-tuning, he proceeded:

"I'd rudder be er niggah
Dan ter be er whi' man,
Dough the whi' man considdah
He se'f biggah;
But ef yo' mus' be white, w'y be hones' ef yo' can,
An ac' es much es poss'ble like er niggah!

"De colah ob yo' skin
Hit don't constertoot no sin,
An' yo' fambly ain't er-
Cuttin' any figgah;
Min' w'at yo's er-doin', an' do de bes' yo' kin,
An' ac' es much es poss'ble like er niggah!"

The tune of this song was melody itself, brimming with that unkempt, sarcastic humor which always strikes as if obliquely, and with a flurry of tipsy fun, into one's ears.

When the performance was ended, and the final tinkle of the rollicking banjo accompaniment died away down the slope of Sommerton Hill, Phyllis put her plump chin in her hands and, with her elbows on her knees, looked steadily at Barnaby for a while.

"Barn," she said, "is my father going to get the colored people to indorse Mr. Tom Bannister?"

"Yes, ma'm," replied the old negro; and then he caught his breath and checked himself in confusion. "Da-da-dat is, er-I spec' so-er-I dun'no', ma'm," he stammered. "Fo' de Lor' I's—"

Phyllis interrupted him with an impatient laugh, but said no more. In due time Barnaby sang her some other ditties, and then she went into the house.

She gave the negro a large coin, and on the veranda steps she called back to him, "Good-night, Uncle Barn," in a voice that made him shake his head and mutter:

"De bressed chile! De bressed chile!" And yet he was aware that she had outwitted him and gained his secret. He knew how matters stood between the young lady and Tom Bannister, and there arose in his mind a vivid sense of the danger that might result to his own and Colonel Sommerton's plans from a disclosure of this one vital detail. Would Phyllis tell her lover? Barnaby shook his head in a dubious way.

"Gals is pow'ful onsartin so dey is," he muttered. "Dey tells der sweethearts mos'ly all what dey knows, spacially secrets. Spec' de ole boss an' he plan done gone up de chimbly er-kallyhootin' fo' good."

Then the old scamp began to turn over in his brain a scheme which seemed to offer him a fair way of approaching Mr. Tom Bannister's pocket and the portemonnaie of Phyllis as well. He chuckled atrociously as a pretty comprehensive view of "practical politics" opened itself to him.

Tom Bannister had not been to see

Phyllis since her father had delivered his opinion to her touching the intrinsic merits of that young man, and she felt uneasy.

Colonel Sommerton, though notably eccentric, could be depended upon for outright dealing in general; still Phyllis had a pretty substantial belief that in politics success lay largely on the side of the trickster. For many years the Colonel had been in the Legislature. No man had been able to beat him for the nomination. She had often heard him tell how he laid out his antagonists by taking excellent and popular short turns on them, and it was plain to her mind now that he was weaving a snare for Tom Bannister.

She thought of Tom's running for office against her father as something prodigiously strange. Certainly it was a bold and daring piece of youthful audacity for him to be guilty of. He, a young sprig of the law, with his brown mustache not yet grown, setting himself up to beat Colonel Mobley Sommerton! Phyllis blushed whenever she thought of it; but the Colonel had never once mentioned Tom's candidacy to her.

The convention was approaching, and day by day signs of popular interest in it

increased as the time shortened. Colonel Sommerton was preparing a speech for the occasion. The manuscript of it lay on the desk in his library.

About this time—it was near September 1st and the watermelons and cantaloupes were in their glory—the 'Colonel was called away to a distant town for a few days. In his absence Tom Bannister chanced to visit Sommerton Place. Of course Phyllis was not expecting him; indeed, she told him that he ought not to have come; but Tom thought differently in a very persuasive way. The melons were good, the library delightfully cool, and conversation caught the fragrance of innocent albeit stolen pleasure.

Tom Bannister was unquestionably a handsome young fellow, carrying a hearty, whole-souled expression in his open, almost rosy face. His large brown eyes, curly brown hair, silken young mustache, and firmly set mouth and chin well matched his stalwart, symmetrical form. He was not only handsome, he was brilliant in a way, and his memory was something prodigious. Unquestionably he would rise rapidly.

"I am going to beat your father for the nomination," he remarked, midmost

the discussion of their melons, speaking in a tone of the most absolute confidence.

"Tom," she exclaimed, "you mustn't do it!"

"Why, I'd like to know?"

She looked at him as if she felt a sudden fright. His eyes fell before her intense, searching gaze.

"It would be dreadful," she presently managed to say. "Papa couldn't bear it."

"It will ruin me forever if I let him beat me. I shall have to go away from here." It was now his turn to become intense.

"I don't see what makes men think so much of office," she complained, evasively. "I've heard papa say that there was absolutely no profit in going to the Legislature." Then, becoming insistent, she exclaimed, "Withdraw, Tom; please do, for my sake!"

She made a rudimentary movement as if to throw her arms around him, but it came to nothing. Her voice, however, carried a mighty appeal to Tom's heart. He looked at her, and thought how commonplace other young women were when compared with her.

"You will withdraw, won't you,

Tom?" she prayed. One of her hands touched his arm. "Say yes, Tom."

For a moment his political ambition and his standing with men appeared to dissolve into a mere mist, a finely comminuted sentiment of love; but he kept a good hold upon himself.

"I cannot do it, Phyllis," he said, in a firm voice, which disclosed by some indescribable inflection how much it pained him to refuse. "My whole future depends upon success in this race. I am sorry it is your father I must beat, but, Phyllis, I must be nominated. I can't afford to sit down in your father's shadow. As sure as you live, I am going to beat him."

In her heart she was proud of him, and proud of this resolution that not even she could break. From that moment she was between the millstones. She loved her father, it seemed to her, more than ever, and she could not bear the thought of his defeat. Indeed, with that generosity characteristic of the sex which can be truly humorous only when absolutely unconscious of it, she wanted both Tom and the Colonel nominated, and both elected. She was the partisan on Tom's side, the adherent on her father's.

Colonel Sommerton returned on the

day before the convention, and found his friends enthusiastic, all his "fences" in good condition, and his nomination evidently certain. It followed that he was in high good-humor. He hugged Phyllis, and in a casual way brought up the thought of how pleasantly they could spend the winter in Atlanta when the Legislature met.

"But Tom—I mean Mr. Bannister—is going to beat you, and get the nomination," she archly remarked.

"If he does, I'll deed you Sommerton Place!" As he spoke he glared at her as a lion might glare at thought of being defeated by a cub.

"To him and me?" she inquired, with sudden eagerness of tone. "If he—"

"Phyllis!" he interrupted, savagely, "no joking on that subject. I won't—"

"No; I'm serious," she sweetly said. "If he can't beat you, I don't want him."

"Zounds! Is that a bargain?" He put his hand on her shoulder, and bent down so that his eyes were on a level with hers.

"Yes," she replied; "and I'll hold you to it."

"You promise me?" he insisted.

"A man must go ahead of my papa,"

she said, putting her arms about the old gentleman's neck, "or I'll stay by papa."

He kissed her with atrocious violence. Even the knee-sag of his trousers suggested more than ordinary vigor of feeling.

"Well, it's good-bye, Tom," he said, pushing her away from him, and letting go a profound bass laugh. "I'll settle him to-morrow."

"You'll see," she rejoined. "He may not be so easy to settle."

He gave her a savage but friendly cuff as they parted.

That evening old Barnaby brought his banjo around to the veranda. Colonel Sommerton was down in town mixing with the "boys," and doing up his final political chores so that there might be no slip on the morrow. It was near eleven o'clock when he came up the hill and stopped at the gate to hear the song that Barnaby was singing. He supposed that the old negro was all alone. Certainly the captivating voice, with its unkempt melody, and its throbbing, skipping, harum - scarum banjo accompaniment, was all that broke the silence of the place.

His song was:

## "DE SASSAFRAS BLOOM

"Dey's sugah in de win' when de sassafras bloom,
When de little co'n fluttah in de row,
When de robin in de tree, like er young gal in de loom,
Sing sweet, sing sof', sing low.

"Oh, de sassafras blossom hab de keen smell o' de root,
An' it hab sich er tender yaller green!
De co'n hit kinder twinkle when hit firs' begin ter shoot,
While de bum'le-bee hit bum'le in between.

"Oh, de sassafras tassel, an' de young shoot o' de co'n,
An' de young gal er-singing in de loom,
Dey's somefin' 'licious in 'em f'om de day 'at dey is bo'n,
An' dis darky's sort o' took er likin' to 'm.

"Hit's kind o' sort o' glor'us when yo' feels so quare an' cur'us,
An' yo' don' know what it is yo' wants ter do;
But I takes de chances on it 'at hit jes can't be injur'us
When de whole endurin' natur tells yo' to!

"Den wake up, niggah, see de sassafras in bloom!
Lis'n how de sleepy wedder blow!
An' de robin in de haw-bush an' de young gal in de loom
Is er-singin' so sof' an' low."

"Thank you, Barn; here's your dollar," said the voice of Tom Bannister when the song was ended. "You may go now."

And while Colonel Sommerton stood amazed, the young man came down the veranda steps with Phyllis on his arm. They stopped when they reached the ground.

"Good-night, dear. I'll win you to-morrow or my name is not Tom Bannister. I'll win you, and Sommerton Place too." And when they parted he came right down the walk between the trees, to run almost against Colonel Sommerton.

"Why, good-evening, Colonel," he said, with a cordial, liberal spirit in his voice. "I have been waiting in hopes of seeing you."

"You'll get enough of me to-morrow to last you a lifetime, sah," promptly responded the old man, marching straight on into the house. Nothing could express more concentrated and yet comprehensive contempt than Colonel Sommerton's manner.

"The impudent young scamp," he growled. "I'll show him!"

Phyllis sprang from ambush behind a vine, and covered her father's face with warm kisses, then broke away before he could say a word, and ran up to her room.

In the distant kitchen Barnaby was singing:

"Kick so high I broke my neck,
An' fling my right foot off'm my leg
Went to work mos' awful quick,
An' mended 'em wid er wooden peg."

Next morning at nine o'clock sharp the convention was called to order, General John Duff Tolliver in the chair. Speeches were expected, and it had been arranged that Tom Bannister should first appear, Colonel Sommerton would follow, and then the ballot would be taken.

This order of business showed the fine tactics of the Colonel, who well understood how much advantage lay in the vivid impression of a closing speech.

As the two candidates made their way from opposite directions through the throng to the platform, which was under a tree in a beautiful suburban grove, both were greeted with effusive warmth by admiring constituents. Many women were

present, and Tom Bannister felt the blood surge mightily through his veins at sight of Phyllis standing tall and beautiful before him with her hand extended.

"If you lose, die game, Tom," she murmured, as he pressed her fingers and passed on.

The young man's appearance on the stand called forth a tremendous roar of applause. Certainly he was popular. Colonel Sommerton felt a queer shock of surprise thrill along his nerves. Could it be possible that he would lose? No; the thought was intolerable. He sat a trifle straighter on his bench, and began gathering the points of his well-conned speech. He saw old Barnaby moving around the rim of the crowd, apparently looking for a seat.

Meantime, Tom was proceeding in a clear, soft, far-reaching voice. The Colonel started and looked askance. What did it mean? At first his brain was confused, but presently he understood. Word for word, sentence for sentence, paragraph for paragraph, Tom was delivering the Colonel's own sonorous speech! Of course the application was reversed here and there, so that the wit, the humor, and the personal thrusts all went home. It was a wonderful piece of *ad captandum*

oratory. The crowd went wild from start to finish.

Colonel Mobley Sommerton sat dazed and stupefied, mopping his forehead and trying to collect his faculties. He felt beaten, annihilated, while Tom soared superbly on the wings of Sommertonian oratory so mysteriously at his command.

From a most eligible point of view Phyllis was gazing at Tom and receiving the full brilliant current of his speech, and she appeared to catch a fine stimulus from the flow of its opening sentences. As it proceeded her face alternately flushed and paled, and her heart pounded heavily. All around rose the tumult of unbridled applause. Men flung up their hats and yelled themselves hoarse. A speech of that sort from a young fellow like Tom Bannister was something to create irrepressible enthusiasm. It ended in such a din that when General John Duff Tolliver arose to introduce Colonel Sommerton he had to wait some time to be heard.

The situation was one that absolutely appalled, though it did not quite paralyze, the older candidate, who, even after he had gained his feet and stalked to the front of the rude rostrum, was as empty of thought as he was full of despair. This

sudden and unexpected appropriation of his great speech had sapped and stupefied his intellect. He slowly swept the crowd with his dazed eyes, and by some accident the only countenance clearly visible to him was that of old Barnaby, who now sat far back on a stump, looking for all the world like a mightily mystified baboon. The negro winked and grimaced, and scratched his flat nose in sheer vacant stupidity. Colonel Sommerton saw this, and it added an enfeebling increment to his mental torpor.

"Fellow-citizens," he presently roared, in his melodious bass voice, "I am proud of this honor." He was not sure of another word as he stood, with bagging trousers and sweat-beaded face, but he made a superhuman effort to call up his comatose wits. "I should be ungrateful were I not proud of this great demonstration." Just then his gaze fell upon the face of his daughter. Their eyes met with a mutual flash of restrospection. They were remembering the bargain. The Colonel was not aware of it, but the deliberateness and vocal volume of his opening phrases made them very impressive. "I assure you," he went on, fumbling for something to say, "that my heart is brimming with gratitude so that

my lips find it hard to utter the words that crowd into my mind." At this point some kindly friend in the audience gingerly set going a ripple of applause, which, though evidently forced, was like wine to the old man's intellect; it flung a glow through his imagination.

"The speech you have heard the youthful lamb of law declaim is a very good one, a very eloquent one indeed. If it were his own, I should not hesitate to say right here that I ought to stand aside and let him be nominated; but, fellow-citizens, that speech belongs to another and far more distinguished and eligible man than Tom Bannister." Here he paused again, and stood silent for a moment. Then, lifting his voice to a clarion pitch, he added:

"Fellow-citizens, I wrote that speech, intending to deliver it here to-day. I was called to Canton on business early in the week, and during my absence Tom Bannister went to my house and got my manuscript and learned it by heart. To prove to you what I say is true, I will now read."

At this point the Colonel, after deliberately wiping his glasses, drew from his capacious coat-pocket the manuscript of his address, and proceeded to read it word

for word, just as Bannister had declaimed it. The audience listened in silence, quite unable to comprehend the situation. There was no applause. Evidently sentiment was dormant, or it was still with Tom. Colonel Sommerton, feeling the desperation of the moment, reached forth at random, and seeing Barnaby's old black face, it amused him, and he chanced to grab a thought as if out of the expression he saw there.

"Fellow-citizens," he added, "there is one thing I desired to say upon this important occasion. Whatever you do, be sure not to nominate to-day a man who would, if elected, ally himself with the niggers. I don't pretend to hint that my young opponent, Tom Bannister, would favor nigger rule, but I do say—do you hear me, fellow-citizens?—I do say that every nigger in this county is a Bannister man! How do I know? I will tell you. Last Saturday night the niggers had a meeting in an old stable on my premises. Wishing to know what they were up to, I stole slyly to where I could overhear their proceedings. My old nigger, Barnaby—yonder he sits, and he can't deny it—was presiding, and the question before the meeting was, 'Which of the two candidates, Tom Bannister and Colonel Som-

merton, shall we niggers support?' On this question there was some debate and difference of opinion, until old Bob Warmus arose and said, 'Mistah Pres'dent, dey's no use er talkin'; I likes Colonel Sommerton mighty well; he's a berry good man; dey's not a bit er niggah in 'im. On t' odder han', Mistah Pres'dent, Mistah Tom Bannistah is er white man too, jes de same; but I kin say fo' Mistah Bannistah 'at he's mo' like er niggah an' any white man 'at I ebber seed afore!'"

Here the Colonel paused to wait for the shouting and the hat-throwing to subside. Meantime the face of old Barnaby was drawn into one indescribable pucker of amazement. He could not believe his eyes or his ears. Surely that was not Colonel Sommerton standing up there telling such an enormous falsehood on him! He shook his woolly head dolefully, and gnawed a little splinter that he had plucked from the stump.

"Of course, fellow-citizens," the Colonel went on, "that settled the matter, and the niggers endorsed Tom Bannister unanimously by a rising vote!"

The yell that went up when the speaker, bowing profoundly, took his seat, made it seem certain that Bannister would be

beaten; but when the ballot was taken it was found that he had been chosen by one vote majority.

Colonel Mobley Sommerton's face turned as white as his hair. The iron of defeat went home to his proud heart with terrible effect, and as he tried to rise, the features of the hundreds of countenances below him swam and blended confusedly in his vision. The sedentary bubbles on the knees of his trousers fluttered with sympathetic violence.

Tom Bannister was on his feet in a moment—it was an appealing look from Phyllis that inspired him—and once more his genial voice rang out clear and strong.

"Fellow-citizens," he said, "I have a motion to make. Hear me." He waved his right hand to command silence, then proceeded: "Mr. President, I withdraw my name from this convention, and move that the nomination of Colonel Mobley Sommerton be made unanimous by acclamation. I have no right to this nomination, and nothing, save a matter greater than life or death to me, could have induced me to steal it as I this day have done. Colonel Sommerton knows why I did it. He gave his word of honor that he would cease all objections to giving his daughter to me in marriage, and that

furthermore he would deed Sommerton Place to us as a wedding present, if I beat him for the nomination. Mr. President and fellow-citizens, do you blame me for memorizing his speech? That magnificent speech meant to me the most beautiful wife in America, and the handsomest estate in this noble county.'

If Tom Bannister had been boisterously applauded before this, it was as nothing beside the noise which followed when Colonel Mobley Sommerton was declared the unanimous nominee of the convention. Meantime, Phyllis had hurried to the carriage and been driven home: she dared not stay and let the crowd gaze at her after that bold confession of Tom's.

The cheering for the nominee was yet at its flood when Bannister leaped at Colonel Sommerton and grasped his hand. The old gentleman was flushed and smiling, as became a politician so wonderfully favored. It was a moment never to be forgotten by either of the men.

"I cordially congratulate you, Colonel Sommerton, on your nomination," said Tom, with great feeling, "and you may count on my hearty support."

"If I don't have to support you, and pay your office rent in the bargain, all the rest of my life, I miss my guess, you

young scamp!" growled the Colonel, in a major key. "Be off with you!"

Tom moved away to let the Colonel's friends crowd up and shake hands with him; but the delighted youth could not withold a Parthian shaft. As he retreated he said, "Oh, Colonel, don't bother about my support; Sommerton Plantation will be ample for that!"

"Hit do beat all thunder how dese white men syfoogles eroun' in politics," old Barnaby thought to himself. Then he rattled the coins in his two pockets. The contributions of Colonel Sommerton chinked on the left, those of Tom Bannister and Phyllis rang on the right. "Blame this here ole chile's eyes," he went on, "but 'twar a close shabe! Seem lak I's kinder holdin' de balernce ob power. I use my influoence fer bofe ob 'em—yah, yah, yah-r-r! an' hit did look lak I's gwine ter balernce fings up tell I 'lec' 'em bofe ter oncet right dar! Bofe of 'em got de nomination—yah, yah, yah-r-r! But I say 'rah fo' little Miss Phyllis! She de one 'at know how to pull de right string—yah, yah, yah-r-r!"

The wedding at Sommerton Place came on the Wednesday following the fall election. Besides the great number of guests and the striking beauty of the bride there

was nothing notable in it, unless the song prepared by Barnaby for the occasion, and sung by him thereupon to a captivating banjo accompaniment, may be so distinguished. A stanza, the final one of that masterpiece, has been preserved. It may serve as an informal ending, a charcoal tail-piece, to our light but truthful little story.

"Stan' by yo' frien's and nebber mek trouble,
An' so, ef yo's got any sense,
Yo'll know hit's a good t'ing ter be sorter double,
An' walk on bofe sides ob de fence!"

THE END

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